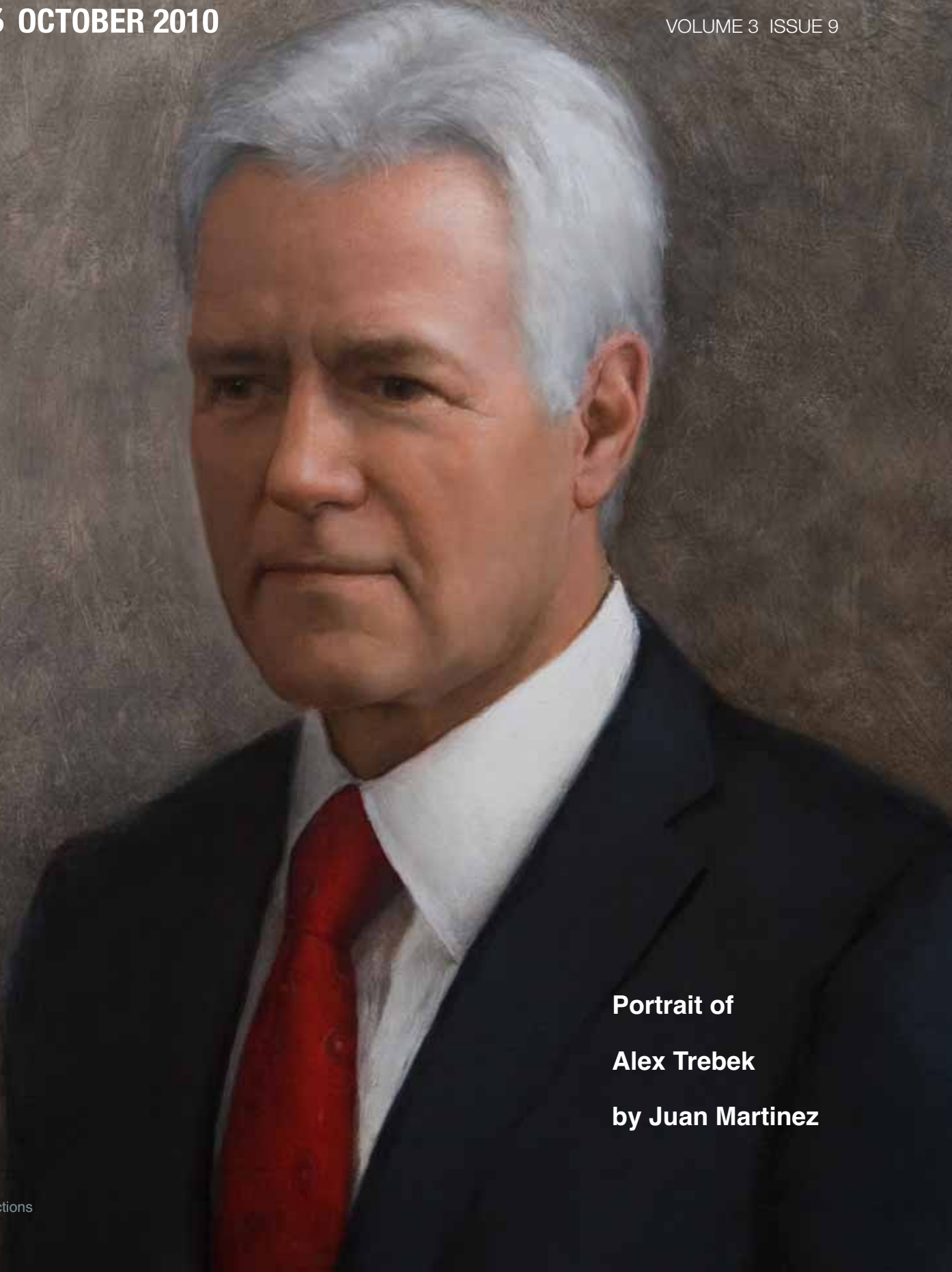


# POETS *and* ARTISTS

O&S OCTOBER 2010

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 9



**Portrait of**

**Alex Trebek**

**by Juan Martinez**

*Publisher / E.I.C.*  
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*Reviewer*  
GRADY HARP

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*publishing as an art form*

# Sara Zin

[www.zingallery.com](http://www.zingallery.com)



“My work focuses on the individual and introspection. Painting is an act of meditation through which I am able to break apart and examine aspects of my identity and then re-assemble the pieces into a newly structured form.”

SARA ZIN





*Reflexion V* oil on canvas 60"x32"

**SARA ZIN** was born in 1984, in Seoul, Korea, and raised in New York. Since childhood, her love for drawing has been the foundation for her development as an artist. In college she studied a variety of mediums from printmaking, sculpture, graphic design, illustration and painting from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. She later moved to Seattle, and received her degree in Interdisciplinary Visual Arts at the University of Washington.

After graduation, she began showing at a variety of galleries in Washington, and is currently represented by the Pacini Lubel Gallery in Seattle. She was awarded the GAP grant in 2009, and has been featured in the Seattle Erotic Art Festival and Unclad. Sara lives in Seattle with her husband, where she paints and works as a designer.

## Q&A SARA ZIN

### **Explain your process.**

I begin by taking a ton of photos then filter and repeat until I find an image that captures a feeling or a moment, something that has a weight to it that I can expand upon. This can take a long time. Once the image is selected I stretch and gesso my canvas, (I like working from a color ground, especially yellow ochre). I then make a simple grid and draw the gesture in charcoal. Then it is just a matter of sitting and painting for hours and hoping there is enough momentum in the image to carry you to the end. I usually listen to music or a long audiobook.

### **Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

I have to clean my workspace before each new piece or at least each new series. This usually helps me to clear my mind and get excited about making a mess again. I also find that stretching and gessoing the canvas is just as much a mental ritual as it is a physical necessity before painting.

### **What is your preferred medium and why?**

I just love painting in oil. It's like bread and butter, classic.

### **How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?**

Having been adopted as a child, family has played an important role in my art and my interest in identity. They have always been a crucial source of support and inspiration. My husband is a designer, and has been invaluable to my growth as an artist. We continually bounce ideas off each other and he is both my muse and my rock.

### **What tool or supply can you not live/work without?**

Art can be made out of anything, but I can't work without an idea or the spark of inspiration. Second to that would probably be a pen or charcoal.



*Intention IV* oil on canvas 44"x34"



*Untitled II* oil on canvas 40"x36"



*Untitled I* oil on canvas 56"x36"





*Untitled IV* oil on canvas 36"x24"



*Reflection IV* oil on canvas 44"x36"

# June Stratton

junestratton.com



**JUNE STRATTON** grew up the San Francisco Bay area in California, attending the College of Fine Arts and Crafts in Oakland until 1979. Not satisfied with the painting skills she had been taught, Stratton worked on developing her own technique for the next several years. It was not until she moved to Seattle that she started her professional career in 1989. During this period Stratton primarily worked on landscapes and was encouraged and influenced by counsel from gallery owners she showed with, notably Kent Lovelace at Stone Press Editions in Seattle and John Pence at the John Pence Gallery in San Francisco. During this period her work was acquired by many major collections including Bank of America, US Department of State, The Mayo Clinic and Texaco Incorporated.

In 2001, Stratton's career took a major turn with her move to Atlanta, Georgia. Taking a brief hiatus, including trips to France, she again focused on developing her painting technique and style. Transforming over the next several years, Stratton's work evolved into the current form that is more figure oriented and cinematic in style. Successful solo and group shows in Savannah and Boston's Lanoue Fine Art Gallery confirmed her oeuvre. Some of her latest work can be seen in major movie productions as well as national and international collections including the acclaimed St Regis Hotel art collection.





study for fragment of *Vanity* oil on linen mounted on panel 12"x8"



*DeBeers* oil on linen mounted on multiple panels 30"x40"

## Q&A JUNE STRATTON

### **Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

I'm pretty hard on my brushes so, sometimes all it takes to get started is a brand new brush.

### **What medium have you not used in the past that you may wish to try out?**

I am very happy with painting. If there was another medium I would like to try it would be film.

### **What will be your signature painting?**

I do not know quite how to answer this. I guess, I would have to choose by selecting the most popular and by popularity it would be one of these three: *Meghan II*, *Good Girl-Shotgun* or *One Horse Opera*.

### **What supplies must you have in your studio before you start any new piece?**

Other than the usual brushes, linen, easel and all; it would be my digital camera and my computer.

### **How have social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and others come into play with your art?**

I tried Facebook for while. I think I added a couple of hours to my day by stopping. I have trouble answering email as it is.

### **In an ideal situation I would be in the same publication with the following artists:**

Gerhard Richter, Francis Bacon, Veja Celmins, Julie Heffernan, Ed Rucha, Man Ray, Gottfried Helnwein and Marilyn Minter .





*Andalusian* oil on linen mounted on multiple panels 16"x 59"



*Embrace* oil on linen, on multiple panels mounted on glass 16"x 59"





*Pearls-Double Strand* oil on linen mounted on multiple panels 24"x 32"

“The most recent paintings *Pearls-Double Strand* and *Embrace* are a return to my movement series where there is some blurring and abstraction. I like the implied narrative in multiple fragmented series. I want to convey a mysterious vignette; a series of stolen glimpses into a private scene.”

JUNE STRATTON



*Exit* oil on linen mounted on panel 12"x 12"



#### **Introspective: *Exit***

It is important for my creative process to experiment. The painting *Exit* is a good example of this kind of experimentation. I wanted to find a way to integrate parts of frayed/torn linen into my work. Before I painted *Exit* there were many frustrating flops and false starts. Until I painted this piece I was not sure as to how to apply this "relic" look to a painting, nor exactly how much fraying would work with my subjects.

Keeping it simple and small, I selected the subject of an exit sign because it was fun subject to play with and I related to it well. I like painting things that glow and I periodically paint text in my paintings because I like the multiple meanings it can have when it is combined with other imagery. I also liked the subject because it reminded me of some Ed Ruscha or early Veja Celmins paintings. In the end I think this painting was a successful step in the experimental process and *Exit* will no doubt reappear in some fragmented interior scene that I will paint in the future.

# Rosemary Dunn Moeller



ROSEMARY DUNN MOELLER finds writing is her way to listen and stretch the time available into deeper hours. Fusing experiences and observations offers opportunities to explore living in the moment. She studied in Paris (in decadence), taught at the University of Bamako, Mali (and Timbuktu), farms in South Dakota with her husband (Lester) while teaching at Huron University SD and UND Grand Forks, and explored the Galapagos, Wolongong and Miyasaki on either side of the Pacific. She's been published in *The Upstart Crow*, *Vermillion Literary Project*, *Mobius*, *Feile-Festa*, *Darkling* and others.

## Awaiting the Ripening of Black Cherries

Hands stiffen from arthritis.  
The juice relieves joint aches.  
It's as simple as that.

Summer's Moon of Black Cherries  
marks a personal festival when we're ready to  
get out there and pick those cherries,  
at the head of the Jewish month of Av,  
cook down the honey sweetened juice for jams,  
which French Revolutionaries wanted to rename *Prairial*,  
can that jelly for winter,  
when Romans would've kept numbering it *Sextilis*,  
share with a neighbor who makes wine,  
named after some task like the Babylonian *Abu*.

But no. Lakota ways named this moon well.  
I am reminded to pick Black Cherries for good reasons:  
the pleasure of hot mornings with long shadows  
that makes me want to weed the garden very early,  
the renewal from late stargazing while listening  
to lowly life in the grass  
those crickets and frogs  
who also know how to appreciate summer nights.  
I do less in the afternoons when  
sweat and hot winds annoy me as much as  
mosquitoes, aching joints.

Lakota appreciation for what really matters:  
relief, beauty, tart tastes and summer juiciness.  
It's simple: the naming of the moons.



# Erin Gergen Halls

[www.eringerghalls.com](http://www.eringerghalls.com)



**ERIN GERGEN HALLS** was born an artist, in 1970. She has no memory of a life before drawing. Her childhood was spent with pencil in hand and no surface was safe from her mark-making. Later, gifted with the encouragement of family and friends she set out in the world, as a single mother with young son in tow, to create functional art as a way to support them. She hadn't yet dared to believe that being a fine artist was practical or possible. In time she became a painter, then a wife and the mother of two daughters. Out of necessity she put the paints aside and returned to her childhood love. Pencils. She dedicated her life to drawing and realized, at long last, that being a fine artist was not only possible, it was genuinely probable. It was her fate.

Erin now lives with her husband and three children in her homestate of Minnesota. Her studio is creekside at the bottom of a wooded ravine and she spends her days drawing in what she sees and then drawing down what she sees on paper. Erin was the recipient of a McKnight Foundation Artist Grant. She had her first solo exhibition in 2007, and since, her drawings have been exhibited and awarded locally and nationally; are in public, permanent and numerous private collections; and have been published.



Becarren colored pencil 8.5"x 11.5"

## Q&A ERIN GERGEN HALLS

### What is your preferred medium and why?

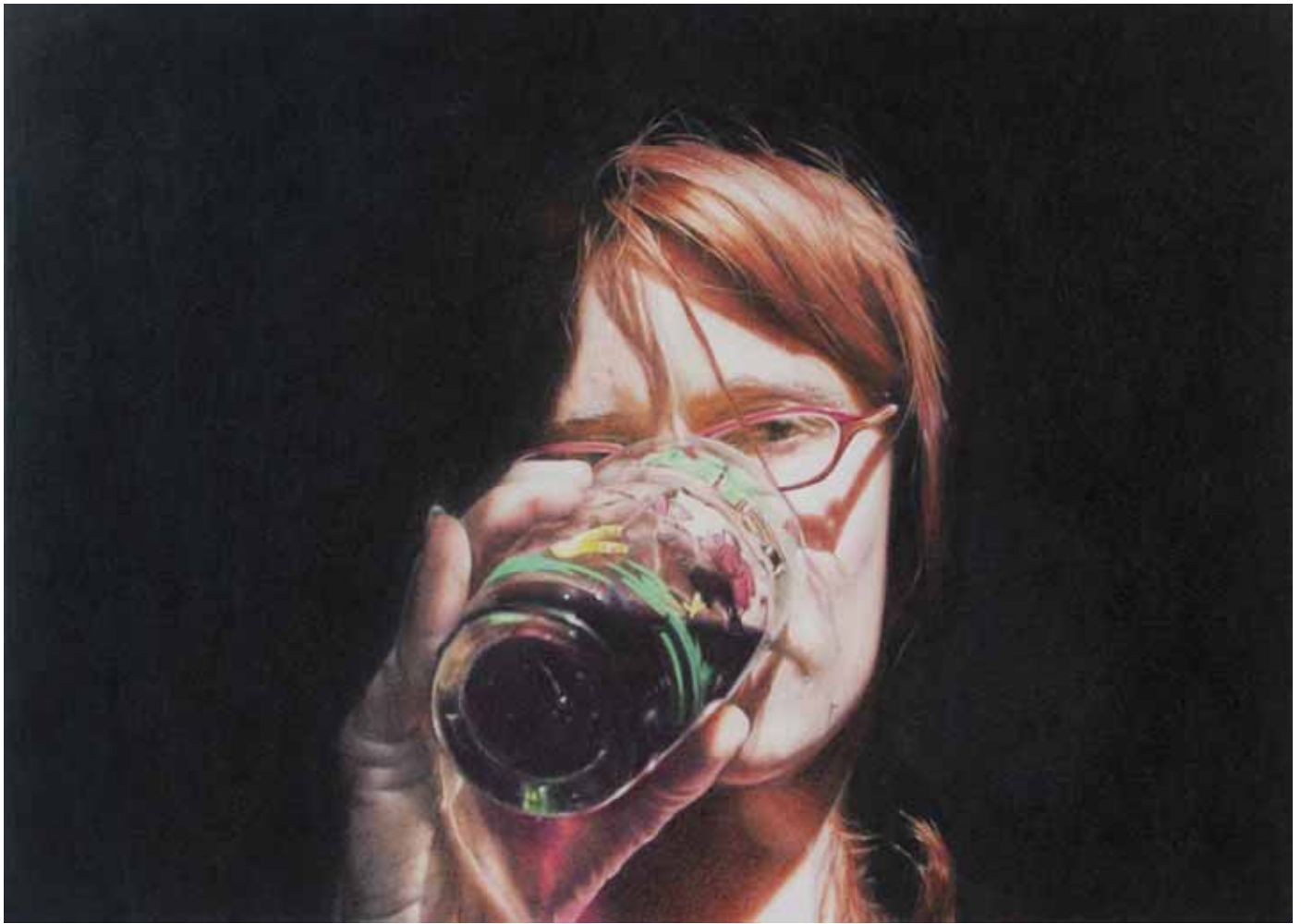
I have a pure passion for drawing. I work with both graphite and colored pencil, and go back and forth between them, depending on what I hope to accomplish with a particular drawing. Two of my greatest loves are drawing and realism, and colored pencils have allowed me to indulge in both. I came to use them when painting with young children underfoot became nearly impossible. A dry medium that is non-toxic, requires no mixing, has no fumes, and no brushes that dry and ruin because you suddenly have a sick kid, was what I needed. I draw when I can, I set them down and they remain ready to use until I resume. That makes them a simple choice. On a deeper level, I find the medium rich with challenge. Realism with colored pencil requires strong drawing skills, confidence in problem solving, a love for detail and focus. As a newer fine art medium I am unable to emulate the processes of the Old Masters.

Technique must be learned through trial and error. I find that thrilling.

### Explain your process:

My artistic process begins with either a narrative in my head, or an emotional connection to an image I want to explore. I work from both reference photos and life. The first stage involves lengthy photo and sketching sessions, and can be painstaking. Often I work for days to get the reference material I will need to execute my vision. The second stage is an initial pencil drawing, done in a hard graphite. I use the photos and sketches and draw from them as you would from life. I am mainly working on very accurately nailing the outlines, putting in more detail as a kind of map for the later addition of color. Once that pencil drawing is exactly as I want it, I trace and transfer the outlines to a fresh sheet of very smooth Strathmore Bristol. I prefer to have virtually no tooth to my paper, though this makes the layering of color more precise and difficult. When working with the

colored pencils, I work one section at a time, erasing the graphite lines before laying in any color. There is an amazing amount of consideration that takes place. I call this part, "twirling my pencil". Because of the transparency of colored pencils, and because the paper only accepts so much pigment before the pencils actually start scratching off the preceding layers, every decision has to be carefully thought out beforehand. What colors will I layer in that section? Darks first, or lights? There may be ten colors used in one area of shaded flesh, for instance, and perhaps a dozen or more layers. Once those decisions have been made I begin the very slow, gradual layering of colors, essentially mixing directly on paper, using a very light hand. I continue with this until the paper is completely saturated with pigment, using the final pencil to "burnish" that area to a desired sheen. I then move on to the next section and "twirl my pencil" as I decide how to proceed.



*Red Wine in a Juice Glass* colored pencil 8.5"x 11"

**Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

I don't know if this is ritualistic, exactly, but everything gets a thorough straightening and cleaning. Working from a home studio, with three kids in and out of my workspace every day, things get chaotic really fast. I not only like to begin each piece with my studio in complete order, but the whole house, really. Deep in the throes of a drawing, things start to get neglected, and when I emerge for a cup of coffee and the house is messy, I tend to take that stress back to the drawing with me. Also, while working, the area around my easel becomes piled with pencils and scraps with notes, cds, pencil shavings and erasers, etc. It feels good to clean up and organize between drawings. I like the idea of starting fresh.

**How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?**

I am a mother and an artist, and all that that encompasses takes place in

the same space. My family life and my art life are intricately laced together. My children are my main source of support, and my greatest distractors. I work with a medium that takes an incredible amount of focus and time, and yet I have nonstop, constant distractions and needs to attend to, the irony of which is not lost on me. The pool of historical, successful women artists who were also mothers, is a shallow one. But I am continually buoyed by those that were, and I revel in finding contemporary women who are rising to the challenges of both endeavors, and doing so with great success on all fronts. Most importantly, my children are growing up surrounded by art, nature, beauty and creativity, and with the knowledge that being an artist is a viable path to take in life.

**How have social networks come into play with your art?**

Art is not created in a vacuum. That being said, at times it has felt as though I was trying to do just that. A

home studio in middle-of-nowhere Minnesota can feel like a vacuum. I have never had an art class, beyond high school, and I am only marginally part of any local art scene. Not knowing any better, I soldiered on, creating in isolation, until I became part of the phenom known as Facebook. Through Facebook I have had the supreme pleasure of being exposed to, and befriended by, many, many talented artists. I have learned more about art history and technical processes. I have stared for hours at art I would never have seen otherwise, and had my work viewed likewise. The camaraderie has been uplifting and inspiring. Because of Facebook my work has been featured in gallery exhibitions, websites and blogs. All while I sit in middle-of-nowhere Minnesota.

**In an ideal situation I would be in the same publication with the following artists:**

This is an incredibly hard one to answer. First, because there are so





*Megan in Mink* colored pencil 21"x 15"

many artists I respect that could be grouped in so many different ways. Second, because it seems so far-fetched to insinuate myself into this powerful group of artists. However, since it is my fantasy publication, I see it as a book of contemporary

women artists, borne from an idea presented at dinner party I'd host. All in attendance would be featured, and the guest list would include Rose Frantzen, Michelle Dunaway, Kate Lehman, Sherrie McGraw, Susan Lyon, Patricia Watwood,

Juliette Aristides and Camie Davis. Although, in writing that, so many more names I can't list here come to mind, there would have to be a second volume in the series. The ladies and I would discuss that over wine and dessert.

RIGHT:  
*Upon Her Mantel  
Lives the Key to  
Spring*  
colored pencil  
7.5"x 9.5"

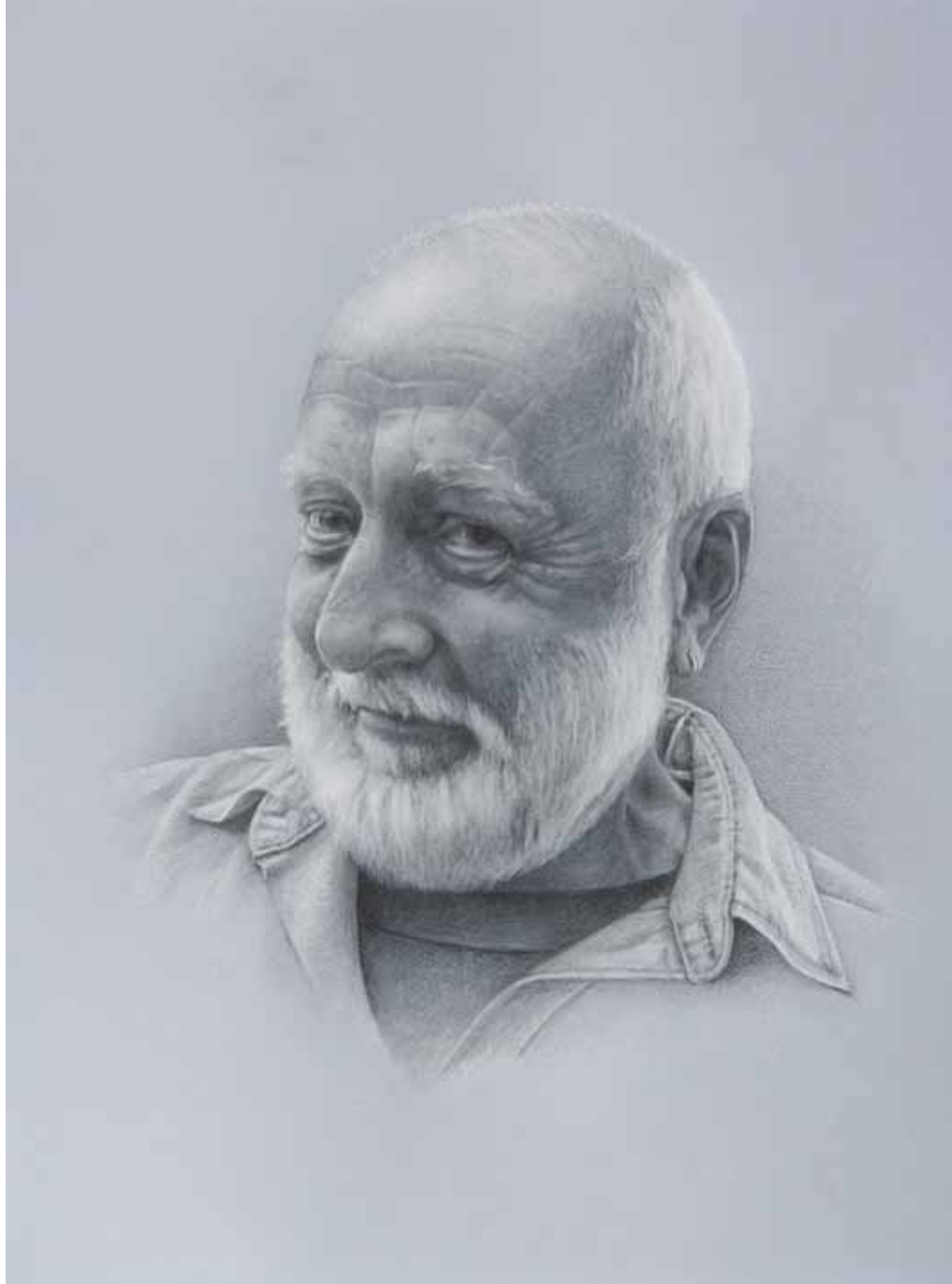


BELOW:  
*Tiger Balm*  
colored pencil  
9"x 13"



“As an artist I long to show colored pencil in a new light, one that is painterly and precise, powerful and poignant. And I desire to express myself by putting to paper the images I find most beautiful, the ones I could not live without drawing. I have dedicated my life to drawing.”

ERIN GERGEN HALLS



*My Dad* graphite and white colored pencil 14"x 11"



### **Introspective: *My Dad***

My father, Michael Gergen, passed away unexpectedly, on Valentine's Day, 2009. For nearly nine months following his death, I was unable to work. I literally drew nothing. I had a deep yearning to draw, to get out the emotions inside of me, but the focus needed to draw was firmly centered on my loss. I would pick up a pencil to sketch, stare at a blank paper, and be consumed by my inability to proceed. It was a grueling period in my life, to say the least. Eventually I took tentative steps, beginning to create again, and it felt wonderful. Then, nearly one year after my father's death, I knew I was ready to draw him, and "My Dad" is the resulting work.

I created this piece using graphite and white colored pencil on a toned paper, the combination being something I had never actually done before. I worked from several reference photos. What I had imagined would be the most difficult drawing I would ever undertake, in fact, proved to be the most rewarding. I was amazed at how fun it was. The tactile quality of the colored pencil blending and mixing with the graphite felt almost as if I was modeling his flesh myself. To stare, hour upon hour, at the face of someone so dear to me, someone lost to me, filled me with joy and peace. I believe I have secured every pore and hair and crease into my memory. I am often amazed that the portrait of my deceased father is the most alive work I have ever created.



# Paul Hostovsky

[www.paulhostovsky.com](http://www.paulhostovsky.com)



**PAUL HOSTOVSKY'S** poems have won a Pushcart Prize, the Muriel Craft Bailey Award from The Comstock Review, and chapbook contests from Grayson Books, Riverstone Press, Frank Cat Press, and Split Oak Press. He has been featured on Poetry Daily, Verse Daily, The Writer's Almanac, and Best of the Net 2008 and 2009. He has two full-length collections of poetry, *Bending the Notes* (2008) and *Dear Truth* (2009). He makes his living in Boston as a sign language interpreter.

## My Lunch with Tony Hoagland

He couldn't not  
flirt with the waitress  
who was sexy with  
bad teeth. She reminded me  
of his best poems,  
the way they smile at you  
through the pain. He wore  
a gray baseball hat  
like he was rooting for gray,  
like there was too much  
black or white in the world,  
too much win or lose,  
and much too much  
rain or shine. We talked about  
Dean Young  
and Larry Levis  
and Jimi Hendrix,  
and Buddhism and capitalism and narcissism,  
and the corrugated green  
pickles they placed at the edge  
of our plates crunched softly in our mouths  
as the conversation turned  
to sadness. He kept saying  
he was lucky. I kept thinking how  
his poems make me wish I'd written them.  
So it felt a little like  
plagiarism—the waitress  
coming back with our credit cards  
and giving me his credit card  
by mistake, and me signing my name  
to his lunch while he was  
piddling in the men's room—  
and me calling it my lunch now  
with Tony Hoagland.

# Juan Cossio

[www.juancossio.com](http://www.juancossio.com)



Of early pictorial vocation, **JUAN COSSIO** combines Art and History studies in the Complutense University of Madrid.

He began in 1997 with Heller Gallery in Madrid, meeting point of the best hyper-realist Spanish painters. His continued and restless search for new methods and new pictorial art techniques has brought him to what begins to be known as "New Realism." He presently works with Plus One Gallery of London.





*Tension* mixed media on panel 170x120 cms







**“I create images starting from a contradiction: I am a painter who does not want to paint reality. I want to interpret it and to reproduce it with all the means that are at my reach.”**

JUAN COSSIO

## Q&A JUAN COSSIO

**Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

I like to have everything in my work place in perfect order.

**How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?**

The art is very jealous, it always comes first, but we are very united around painting. Art is our election and our way of life.

**How has digital accessibility come into play with your work?**

It's very important. Photoshop is like a tool that allows me to interpret reality.

**What is your preferred medium and why?**

My work is mixed media. It's important to have a deep knowledge of all media in order to mix them without technical problems.

**What tool or supply can you not live/work without?**

Jazz music is essential when I'm working.

**Do you believe art should serve a political purpose or remain neutral?**

Art is fed on all the aspects of the life. The policy is one of them.

**What painting do you have hanging in your living room?**

I have a painting of a forest from Macedonio de la Torre.

**Why are you a painter?**

Because I don't know how to do other things.

**How long does one of your pieces take to finish?**

A medium size between one or two months.

**Explain your process:**

My technique consists basically: To take a high resolution photograph and alter it in the computer. I make a photographic enlargement at the same size of the panel. I prepare the wooden panel for paint. On the background, depending the motif, I use pigments transfers, tracings... I cut acetates from the photograph for masking the airbrush spray. I spray acrylic and enamel. I also use pencils and fine brushes.

1. Cutting over acetates on the photographic enlargement



2. Preparing the wooden panel



3. Painting with the airbrush on a masked panel



3. Masking system order of the painting "La Menina"







*Crucifixión* mixed media on panel 170x120 cms



*A factory. A body. I* mixed media on panel 100x150 cms



*Industrial Revolution II* mixed media on panel 120x150 cms

**Introspective: *Industrial Revolution II***

This was the first painting in which I introduced a background that was not minimal. The solitude and the fragility of the individual in front of the industrial world. The challenge was to combine two worlds in a whole in which the human being only has color.



# Rustin Larson

<http://www.iowasource.com/blog/73-rustin/>  
<http://www.kruufm.com/user/rustin-larson>



**RUSTIN LARSON** forms his word patterns in Fairfield, Iowa, mostly in the present time period. His latest poetry collection is *The Wine-Dark House* (Blue Light Press, 2009), and his previous is *Crazy Star* (Loess Hills Books, 2005). Rustin hosts the radio show Irving Toast, Poetry Ghost on KRUU-LP, 100.1 FM, the first solar-powered radio station in the Midwest. He also maintains a blog of his musings for The Iowa Source, southeast Iowa's premier entertainment magazine. Rustin's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *North American Review*, *Atlanta Review* and many other magazines and anthologies.

## TONGUE

The squid-tree waits for something to sail into its arms.

In daylight  
the path is okay.

At night the place is thick with ghosts  
and coyote tracks.

Right now it's a fairly average afternoon.  
The waitress seems to know me,

the co-author of this new book  
*it's astonishing the Gestapo haven't disappeared.*

In a totally dark room do you see stars  
where your hands should be?

We become acquainted with the spoons,  
hope, overcast,

promise of thundershowers.  
I hear children playing in the garden below,

half Hungarian,  
half English on the tongue.

In a totally dark room,  
do you see a foggy halo around a struck match?

The perimeter seems to talk to me.

Write something that means only to you.  
In a totally dark room do you hear the voice of a child?

## WINTER JAZZ UP AT THE GROUP HOME

Patch of snow like an atoll, that was the last  
question I had. Some grace before I knew  
anything. There was a window in which  
I bathed; not everyone can say that.  
I had an interest in security; it's one of those  
things. Before my images were because  
of my readings of candle-flame. My scalp  
like paper, this will get you nowhere.  
It is just a waste, though important.  
The truth-and-blood crew is reading in the garage.  
The nurse will explain.

## THE MACHINE

The man sucked into the machine, the machine  
becomes another tool like a ball-point pen  
and his blood ink. He writes with his  
body and his death and he makes the news-  
paper, name withheld until notification.

Don't try to make good on something bad  
the mother tells the child and the child ain't  
listening. The movie seems like a lake  
into which he can pool himself starlight  
and cigarette, swim, swim toward the beacon and panic.

He started to panic in the middle of the lake,  
he reported, and he got cramps and started  
to go under if it weren't for Mark's cigarette  
glowing on the shore there with his dog Valiant.

This was just another example of the machine.  
I guess I had no idea that it would affect  
me in the motel room. I hung my towel  
on the idea rack and flicked on the television,  
my life playing in re-run again and the  
nasty Vermont earth and Rolling Rock.

The child grew up and became a successful  
human being. The machine ran well ignorant  
of its true purpose until that day came,  
I would like to say again, though it is the  
same point in time without beginning middle  
or end. Someone had to nonetheless  
clean up the man's urgent message.

REVIEW BY GRADY HARP



# Kenny Harris

## PORTALS AND SPACES AT THE GLOAMING

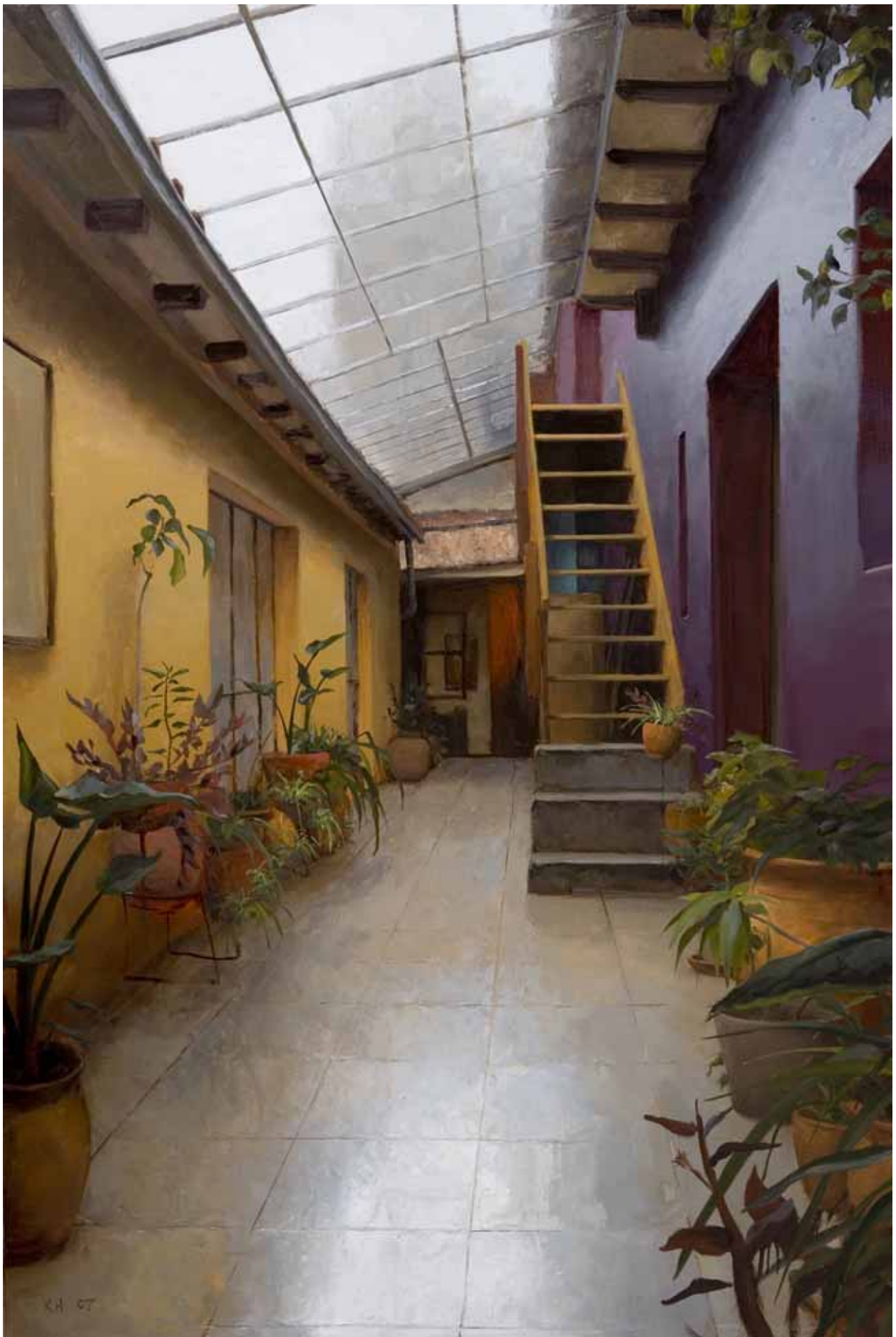
*Art Gray, photographer*

**“What art offers  
is space —  
a certain  
breathing room  
for the spirit.”**

*John Updike*

KENNY HARRIS explores. From his childhood exposure to the special light that illuminates the San Francisco Bay region he traveled to the middle of America, training at Colorado College, taking leave of the clear mountain air/high light to study in Florence, Italy where he absorbed the chiaroscuro of the Renaissance painters. The time spent painting in San Francisco and New York increased his curiosity to discover other spaces, other lights and he traveled and painted in Central and South America, Cuba, Europe and Istanbul. Though his home studio is now in Venice, California he maintains the fascination for the differences of light sources from his mental images and the paintings he created during these travels, these explorations of the world and of the qualities of atmosphere that have become the center of his creative output.





*Casa de la  
Gringa,  
Cuzco, Peru  
72" X 48"*



**“I would like the colors, their shapes and positions to be arrived at in response to and dictated by the condition of the total space at the time they are considered.”**

*Richard Diebenkorn*

*Tango Studio,  
Buenos Aires,  
Argentina  
48" X 32"*



*Yoga Studio*, Buenos Aires, Argentina 60" X 90"



*El Beso*,  
Buenos Aires,  
Argentina  
48" X 56"





*Green Light, Cuba* 108" X 72"





*Convex Glass, Cuba 48" X 30"*

Whether in simple empty spaces whose only occupants are crepuscular air and reflected colors from that special time of the day that fascinates Harris, that time of not day and not night known as the gloaming or twilight or dusk, the artist finds inspiration. The light is soft, diffused from the sky when the sun is below the horizon, and in Harris' choices of empty rooms, the light is further strained from entry by open doors or windows, and is captured by reflections from the changing colors of the walls, the ceilings and the textures the room contains.

Perhaps it is this infatuation with the gloaming that makes his paintings so imbued with that quality of light mysteriously connected to darkness, that time also called twilight –a duality or inbetweeness that sets his spaces as stages for stories told or expected or simply imagined. As John Muir said *"The grand show is eternal. It is always sunrise somewhere; the dew is never dried all at once; a shower is forever falling; vapor is ever rising. Eternal sunrise, eternal dawn and gloaming, on sea and continents and islands, each in its turn, as the round earth rolls."*

Though Kenny Harris paints landscapes and figures and still lifes with a keen observing eye, selecting to study the magic he creates with his selected interiors from his many travels allows a special entry into his talent. He is drawn to the combination of space, light, reflection, surface and environment that come together especially well in spare interiors, doorways or portals devoid of people who may have just left the room, the door, or have forgotten these places exist.

In Cuzco, Peru he found *Casa de la Gringa*, and created a painting so rich in color, the space free of fauna but rich in flora, and sense of peace filled with exits for the eye but also for admission of light. In Buenos Aires, Argentina Harris recreated spaces meant for tango and for solace, as in *El Beso*, a tango club gleaming with polished floors and mirrors or *Tango Studio*, whose shiny floors that echo the squeaks of tango shoes in practice, are captured in the major mirror of this tiny room, while *Yoga Studio* erases all drama as a place for meditation –simply the stillness and gentle reflected reminders that life outside goes on.



*Blue Tiles, Cuba* 96"X 84"

Harris visited Cuba intending to capture that idiom of island solitude with the idiomatic rhythm of dance and expectation. His own residence provided the relaxed time to absorb the gloaming light and shadows as in *Blue Tiles*, while another space in *Green Light* challenges the eye with light reflected off color beyond a distant portal. In *Deep Recession* he allows us to appreciate the rather public art for sale room beyond whose doors are the rooms, in all their patterned suggestion of the living space in this house cum business place: *Convex Glass*, though in the same house, is more austere, the available light is quietly reflected in a simple mirror and the sheen of the polished tile floor. With only minimal cues Harris shares with us the special atmosphere that is Cuba.

A different place, a different light, and Harris finds the unique prolonged eventide of Florence, Italy in *Rebecca's Atelier*, Florence and in *Camilla's Flat*, Florence. The portals, the irregular spaces, the open windows all play



**"A painter is a  
choreographer  
of space."**

*Barnett Newman*





*Deep Recession, Cuba 32" X 30"*



*Rebecca's Atelier, Florence, Italy 36" X 24"*

**"I was never one  
to paint space,  
I paint air."**

*Fairfield Porter*

with a light that could only be described as Mediterranean. And in different locales, such as Normandy, the shafts of light illuminate and reflect in a conversation as in *Harmony in Blue and Yellow*, or in Istanbul the signpost for much of the artist's discovery of near, distant, reflected and absorbed light is suggested in *Portal* – an entry and an exit, a place now stilled but not distant from the people that will come at the call of the muezzin.

But perhaps Kenny Harris says it best: *"For me it is the characteristics of the light which imbue inanimate objects with that sense of being. When it works, and the space comes to life in that calm transitional light, it evokes the elusive emotion of the passing of the light. It is present. I feel it, and I do my best to express it."*

Kenny Harris then is a young burgeoning talent who has found quiet and invites us to share.



*Camilla's Flat, Florence, Italy 48" X 32"*



*Harmony in Yellow and Blue,*



*Portal, Istanbul* 48" X 32"



# Sharon Sprung

[www.sharonsprung.com](http://www.sharonsprung.com)



**SHARON SPRUNG** is a contemporary realist who combines abstract backgrounds with a highly developed realism in the subject. She attended Cornell University and studied at The Art Students League and the National Academy of Design. She has had a dozen one-person shows in New York. The most recent was at Gallery Henoch, where she is represented, in the Fall of 2008. The latest of her group exhibitions include a summer show at Gallery Henoch, and participation in a portrait show at the Museum of the Russian Academy of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, Russia. She has taken part in numerous group shows at museums around the US including the Outwin-Boochever competition at the National Portrait Gallery, the Synergies Exhibition, sponsored by the United Nations in NYC., and the upcoming "Inspiring Figures, American Women and Figurative Art" exhibit at the Butler Institute of American Art in September. She is also represented by Portraits, Inc in New York City.

She has been featured in numerous magazines, including, International Artist Magazine, The Artists Magazine, Fine Arts Connoisseur, Journal of the Portrait Society of America, American Art Collector and others, and was featured on WNET's SundayArts "Profiles of the Art Students League." Her work can be found in private and corporate collections, including Princeton University, the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Federal Court, Southern District of New York. Sprung instructs in both drawing and painting at The Art Student's League and The Museum School of the National Academy in NYC. She teaches Contemporary Realism, figure painting in oil from the model, still life and cityscape. Her home and studio are on Atlantic Avenue in Downtown Brooklyn.



*Commuter Line* oil on panel 24"x36"



*Mother and Daughter* acrylic and oil on board 60"x40"

## Q&A SHARON SPRUNG

### Explain your Process:

Primarily I paint people and therefore the beginning of a painting is the choice of that person. My models may be a professional from the National Academy or the Art Students League, or someone I see on the street or meet in a bar. I watch and observe without their knowledge and try to gauge who they are in relation to me, visually. After I arrange a posing session, I have already spent considerable time thinking about them. We'll try multiple poses I've already considered and decide what to paint. Then, I take photos, make sketches and spend the 10 days necessary to prepare the panel and settle on the final pose after which I work from life.

### What painting do you have

### hanging in your living room?

I rarely hang my paintings in my home. Once finished, I generally choose not to have my work around. But, there is one large painting that has been in my living room for more than 15 years. Although I've wanted to sell it, for reasons I don't quite understand it has never happened. The background is a multi-colored flow of abstract colors. Upon this field are two large (but under life-size) Dragon Lilies in full bloom. The painting is dubbed "Mother and Daughter", reflecting the psychological side of the image.

### How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?

My husband married me knowing I was an artist. He understood the commitment and has made it





**Zeli** oil on panel 36"x36"

easier for me to do my art. He does a lot of the side tasks like maintaining my website, making photos and framing and has been emotionally supportive as well. My son has grown up within an artist's life. My studio, for example, is far larger than his bedroom and I often work from early morning till late at night, but it's the world he was born into.

**What is your preferred medium and why?**

I work primarily in Oil, with some graphite drawing. I'm captured by the intensity of color and texture available in oils – the endless possibilities of brush, palette knife and fingers, swimming in a sea of color and depth. Many times with a painting, I have to remind myself to stay focused on the task and

not get lost in playing with the paint. I find it the broadest and most expressive medium.

**What tool or supply do you feel you cannot live/work without?**

Vasari Oils and palette knives. Vasari Oils because they are rich and pure. For the last few years I have been working more and more with knives and have amassed a





*Folding Chairs* oil on panel 36"x47"

large collection of shapes and sizes. They add a physicality I really enjoy. When working on a hard panel, palette knives allow extensive possibilities to play with the paint that brushes do not. I love the sensation of moving with palette knife against panel, creating different textures.

**Do you believe that art should serve a political purpose or be neutral?**

Art's role in general elevates the human condition. Working with

people is a unique way to bridge gaps and create emotional connections that can serve as a mirror with a powerful reflection. Art is not only to serve a purpose or agenda, but to be a physical, visual image that transcends opinion or political partisanship. For me, it is important for my painting to have an emotional and psychological presence reflective of the human condition and to be visually compelling: that it draw the eye and engage the emotions.

**How long does one of your pieces**

**take to finish?**

Generally 3 weeks to 2 months. I used to work on paintings one at a time, but now I tend to have 3 or 4 in process, working on them alternately. I have come to find it a better method because it automatically creates a more objective distance from any given work which prevents getting bogged down or caught up in unproductive repetition. Also each painting informs the others, so I feel supported and propelled by the differences in the work.



P oil on panel 32"x28"

"Considering my body of work, it is apparent that the female form is a major focus of attention. I call it part self-portrait and part rebellion. These paintings are reflective of who I am. They are self-portraits, emotionally speaking, because I construct the images. They are founded on thoughts and feelings I observe in myself, and which I want to articulate in paint. The other catalyst for me is a rebellion against so many of the depictions of the female body that seem to me primarily from the male perspective; where what I experience as sensuality is more palpably displayed as objectified beings. I want people to see pictures of women that are painted by a woman. I believe I have to take advantage of every second with the model, seeing and observing, because the model can teach me



*Portrait of A* oil on panel 22"x22"

to look purely with my eyes, seeing things innocently and abstractly when I work.

I think paintings that are successful describe a person, or a time, or a place that gives the opportunity to viewers to really see things differently. It can give us an insight into our own history or that of another. And is a way of knowing things without really knowing things. Portraits are especially important because they give you a sense of another person and the many layers that make up that person. The portrait artist has an important responsibility to visually tell the world who a person is, and for this reason, being a portrait artist is an appreciated challenge, and the essential piece of what I am doing right now."

SHARON SPRUNG



# Juan Martinez

[www.juanmartinez.com](http://www.juanmartinez.com)



**JUAN CARLOS MARTINEZ** is an award-winning artist from Toronto, Canada whose work has been featured in various publications and exhibitions around the world. He was trained in what is now known as the classical realist tradition under the tutelage of master painter, M. John Angel in Toronto and in Florence, Italy. Juan started his professional artistic journey rather late in life because in a previous incarnation he had been, among other things, an intellectual property lawyer but eventually, he gave up that life to pursue his vocation as a classical painter. Today, in addition to maintaining his portfolio and working on commissions, Juan is usually busy teaching, writing, or lecturing. He has acquired an international reputation both as an artist and art educator. His work hangs in numerous private and institutional collections in Canada and the United States. Juan Martinez is also a chief instructor at Toronto's Academy of Realist Art (ARA), one of the largest and most significant institutions of its kind. He is the author of a popular 6-part instructional series in *International Artist Magazine*, entitled "The Academy Way". Juan has been interviewed or featured in a number of publications, both online and in print, and has recently appeared in "Star Portraits: Season 1", on Canada's Bravo! network.

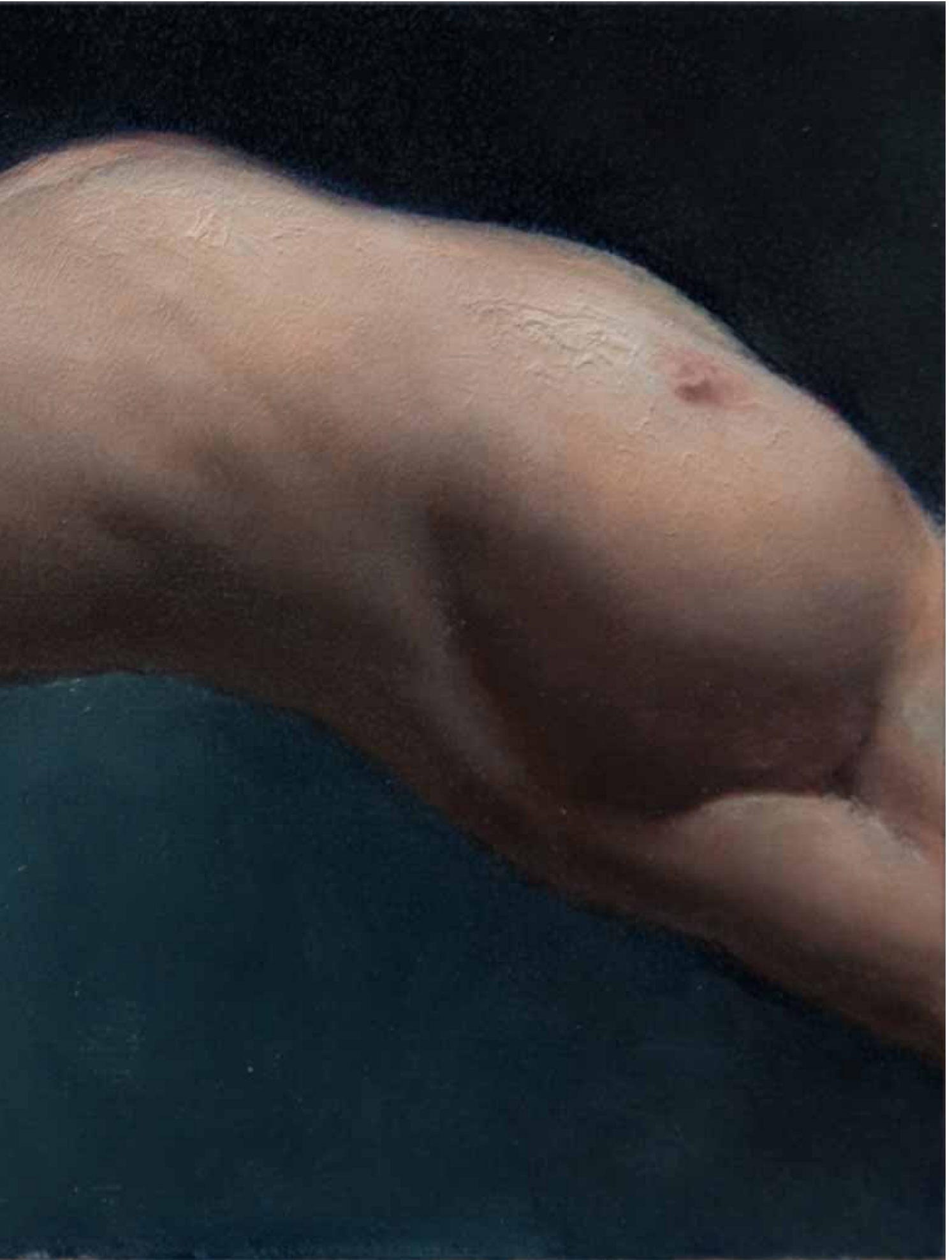


*In Shadow* oil on panel 24"x18"

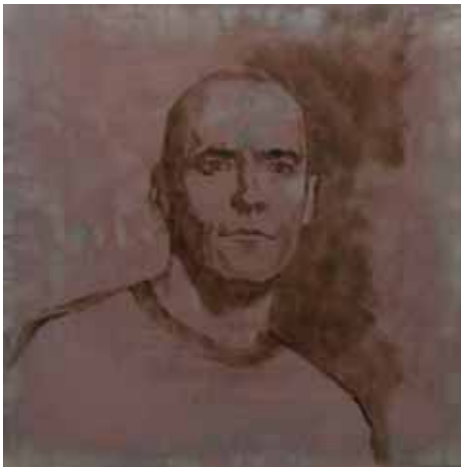
“As I concentrate more and more on the human figure, I feel an ever greater connection between past and present. I want to make pictures that are anodyne rather than shocking, unifying and universal rather than divisive — always centering on the figure as the ultimate expression of the humanist artistic tradition.” JUAN MARTINEZ







*Bridge* oil on canvas panel 6"x9"





*Portrait of Jordan* oil on linen on panel 9"x12"

## Q&A JUAN MARTINEZ

### **My process:**

For most figure work using a live model I start directly on the panel or canvas using paint instead of starting with charcoal or doing a preparatory drawing. However, if using photographs, or for more elaborate or commissioned work, I will do preliminary drawings and color studies based on the live model before referring to the photos. In the more fully rendered, "classical realist" paintings (as compared to alla prima work) I paint in a series of layers, each being allowed to dry before the next is applied. I usually begin with a toned imprimatura of lead white and umber. In the case of the self portrait that I used here as an example, the imprimatura is unusually thin and transparent on account of the painting being on a copper panel, which already is of a mid-tone value. The next step is to roughly paint in a drawing using a combination wash and dry-brush technique. The drawing stage will have the main shapes -- the

lights and darks -- and the whole composition laid out using just umber. After that, the preliminary color stage is applied using a full range of paints. At this point, the paint consistency is thin and somewhat diluted except for the lightest areas, which are applied in a thick impasto. This entire layer is allowed to dry completely before proceeding. I treat the next layer as either the beginning of the "finish", or the end of the preparation. In short, it is where I more fully establish all the colors and shapes with more opaque paint and greater accuracy. In the final or finishing stage, I tend to use rather small brushes and perhaps a little more medium (made of stand oil, linseed oil, and spike lavender) so that I can achieve the desired level of detail and blending, using a combination of direct techniques and glazing. This stage takes the most amount of time.

### **Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

I don't really have a ritual before starting a new work. Because of my

teaching schedule I am often in a "catch as catch can" situation and don't have time for much of a "pre-game" ritual. If anything, my preparation consists mostly of thinking and contemplating matters whenever I get a moment.

### **What is your pet peeve regarding today's art scene?**

I really don't know everything that is going on in the art scene today (which is probably a good thing for my sanity) so I may indeed be peeved when I say how annoying it is that artists are constantly asked to donate their work. People seem to think artists are more than happy to work for nothing and that all paintings, no matter their size or style, take no more than a day or a couple of hours to complete. My other main annoyance is the mean-spirited, vitriol spewing and ignorant art critic; the kind usually found in major newspapers.

### **How have social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and others**





*Nude back alla prima* oil on canvas panel 12"x9"

### come into play with your art?

Although I'm not an obsessive user of social networks, I do use them and I find they can definitely help form connections with people I may not otherwise have had the chance to meet or to stay in touch with. These services don't come into play directly into my art in any way I can perceive, but networking with peers, seeing what others are doing, exchanging

ideas and making contacts, etc., are all helpful to my otherwise "living in a bubble" existence.

### How has digital accessibility come into play with your work?

I think that the digitization of nearly everything during the past decade or so has been mostly a boon to artists. Acquiring reference material and information is now so much less laborious than it was prior to digital

cameras and the Internet. This is also the downside of the digital world as there is an ease of copying and, therefore, a potential for copyright infringement, which didn't exist to the degree it does today. Still, social and professional interactions are more immediate and "convenient" than in the past (or so it seems, at any rate). One doesn't always have to lug around a physical portfolio, for example. Some artists sell their work



*Lidia* oil on panel 20"x16"

online now and also prepare and sell their own prints, all on account of digitization. I haven't taken advantage of these possibilities as much as perhaps I should have, but am eager to delve a little more into that realm, as well. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" I suppose, applies in this case.

**What is your preferred medium and why?**

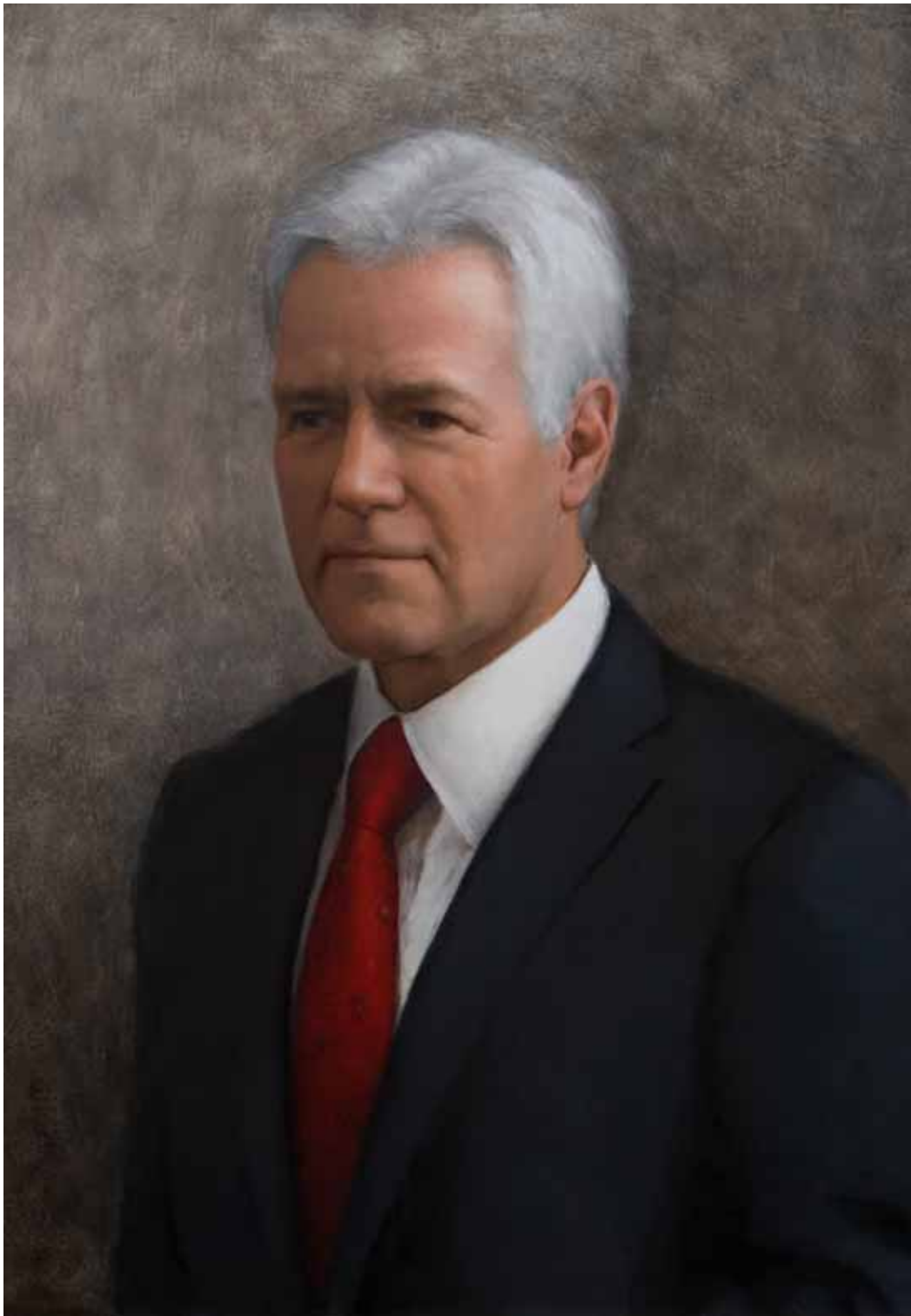
Oil paint is my preferred medium

because of its versatility, depth and intensity of color, and on account of its long tradition of use in fine art. As I allude to in my artist's statement, I feel I am a (small) part of a great tradition of painting that goes back at least five hundred years, and oil paint helps to underscore that connection with the past. To me this is an important aspect of artistic philosophy and expression; to be connected with the past, but also to

have both feet fully planted in the present. In a very practical way, using oil paint helps me do all of that.

**What tool or supply can you not live/work without?**

Strangely enough for someone who claims to be a traditionalist, I can't seem to live or work without my computer and its connection to the internet! And lead white!



*Portrait of  
Alex Trebek  
oil on panel  
24"x18"*



**Introspective: *Portrait of Alex Trebek***

This portrait came about as part of a television show in which I was asked to participate. It was an episode in a series called "Star Portraits" which airs on the Bravo! TV network in Canada. (See <http://www.starportraits.ca>). In each episode, three artists were introduced to a surprise celebrity and then asked to create a portrait of that celebrity to be completed over the next two weeks. At the end of the process the celebrity then is brought back to see the finished works and was asked to choose one of the paintings to keep in his or her collection. I was pleasantly surprised when I found out Alex Trebek was to be our sitter. However, during the initial sitting I soon saw that Mr. Trebek was, indeed, animated and intelligent, but also somewhat garrulous. This made it difficult to envision the kind of portrait I'd be able to do in such a short time. I generally seek a placid, sometimes even melancholic mood in portraits, but the sitter certainly wasn't giving much of that while on the set! Eventually, I did settle on what I felt was a contemplative or thoughtful look for Mr. Trebek in my portrait. As it turned out, mine was not the painting that he chose to keep, yet I felt at the time it was my best interpretation, remaining true to the subject and to my own vision.



# Claudia Serea

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CLAUDIA SEREA is a Romanian-born poet who immigrated to the U.S. in 1995. Her poems and translations have appeared in *Ascent*, *Meridian*, *Mudfish*, *Main Street Rag*, *Harpur Palate*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *The Fourth River*, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, among others. She is the author of two poetry collections: *Eternity's Orthography* (Finishing Line Press, 2007) and *To Part Is to Die a Little*, forthcoming from Červená Barva Press. She also writes creative nonfiction, published by *The Rambler* and *The Writers' Workshop Review*. Claudia lives in New Jersey and works in New York for a major publishing company.

## Mother Goose

The village women call you  
the wife of Goose,  
the poor dead man.  
You slobber me with kisses  
I wipe off.  
You point your crooked cane  
at this and that,  
at this one and the other,  
as you did in your Communist youth  
when you pointed your finger *You, you,  
and you, and you, and you.*  
You ate fear with the spoon.  
Those marked were taken at night in black cars  
and no one heard of them again.

And today, the sun splashes your hands  
and mine with the same light.  
Small talk spills like salt.  
You sip the brown ring from  
the bottom of the bourbon glass  
and pose for a picture.  
My daughter calls you *baba*  
and hides behind my back  
and you laugh, benevolent,  
enormous,  
your steel teeth intact.

## The red string

I am bound to you with a thin red string  
that runs from your belly to my navel  
and into my daughter's body.

It's a thread of blood that trickles between us,  
an invisible umbilical cord  
that pulls us together like beads.

The string runs under my skirt  
and sometimes I forget it's there.

I move farther away,  
until the red wool unravels  
and you tug at it in my sleep:

*Come see me, you say.*

It happened when my daughter was born,  
a tender bead added to the necklace.

You spoke to me as I lied on the hospital bed,  
aflutter with pain,  
my body woven with wires and tubes.

The red thread pulled me through delirious waters.

I wasn't ready to let go.

I told you *Grandma, I'm not coming today  
to prune the roses in your garden,*

but, everywhere I go, the red string follows  
dangling softly between my thighs—

and I know I'll never get lost in the world.

# Steven Reigns: *INHERITANCE* *'Silence Only Protects Predators.'*



photo by Jenny Walters



cover art by David G. Moore

Reading Steven Reigns' unflinchingly real poems is a reminder of one of the core aspects of poetry: observe or experience, withdraw for perspective, condense and distill, and place with polished craft on a page. In his collection of poems, *INHERITANCE*, he has done just that, though these poems cover a period of history in the poet's life, a history that reflects childhood, family, and the gradual unraveling of the Norn's thread of life, moments that brought him to the place he now occupies – a mature poet who has survived the at times cruel dynamics of coming to grips with his own sexuality. He has not only stepped above the hurdles of his past – physical and sexual abuse from family, pain inflicted from the venom of schoolmates, from a temporary hiding place with drugs and encounters not always positive – but he has also gained degrees in both Creative Writing and Clinical Psychology, all providing the matrix on which to publish five volumes of poetry, create several art installations, art performances and works of art, and serve his community as an innovative and meaningful teacher. Steven Reigns is, then, successful, and one of the motivators of his success has been his addiction to personal narrative to share his own journey, a quietly magnanimous gesture to all those who struggle with coming to accept self – especially sexual self.

Reigns accepts his past, holds his parents accountable for their parenting in at times acerbic tones that only time has reshaped to create tolerable memories.

## ***SHE KNEW***

*In a dream  
I'm with my neighbor.  
We are boys standing in the basement of my boyhood home.  
He is holding me down, touching me and I  
become aware there is someone watching.  
My mother is there.  
The touching continues, but my fear is replaced with shame.  
My mother does nothing except watch.  
I feel her anger, her disgust, her disappointment.  
It is directed at me.*

*I wake up from the dream.  
I can't cry.  
I write it down to prevent amnesia,  
**She knew.***

*I shouldn't have been surprised when I heard  
about mom not confronting her brother  
when my sister complained  
of a cousin who fondled, felt-up, and fingered  
places of her anatomy she couldn't even name.*

*By not telling my mother,  
I was spared the knowledge she wouldn't have done anything.  
Spared 20 years of having this unnamed feeling.  
In a way my silence did protect me.  
Until the dream and penned note beside my bed.*

Those paternal expectations that breed self contempt even without spoken words Reigns shares in the following:

#### **DAD'S EMPIRE**

*He rubbed my mother's swollen belly.  
Dreamt of the All-American Boy he'd raise,  
games of catch, putting worms on hooks,  
and giving advice on the ladies.  
He took photos at the birth.  
The second child a boy,  
his dreams finally fulfilled.  
The family is now complete.  
They are the American dream;  
suburban home, 2 cars, privacy fence, a dog,  
one boy, one girl, a 401k, and secrets we kept.*

And when parental confrontation occurs, instead of guidance and support and understanding that might have smoothed the already treacherous road of self perception and sexual identity ahead, the abuse continues:

#### **AFTER THE BALLGAME**

*I'm on the toilet,  
pants around my ankles.*

*My mother knocks,  
opens the door,  
lets herself in  
to the bathroom  
after a baseball game  
I was forced to play.  
I should have locked the door.*

*I'm naked,  
exposed, vulnerable.  
I am captive.*

*She sits on the edge of the bathtub  
and talks to me about  
how much I embarrass her—my light voice,  
my limp wrists,  
my lack of baseball ability.*

*"You know, if you keep acting like a girl  
maybe we should start putting you in dresses."*

*I cannot think of ways to leave this situation.  
My pants and underwear rest on my cleats.  
My ass dirty,  
my torso naked,  
"You seem to want to be a girl.  
Maybe we could go to the doctor and he can make you a girl."  
I sit humiliated listening to her words of degradation.  
Teased in the halls of school,  
spit words aimed at me on the bus  
and now this.*

*The toilet, the timing, the topic  
keeps me from retelling the story for twenty years.  
Still blaming myself for  
being girly and not locking the door.*

*She will not mention this conversation again.  
I don't either, out of fear of hearing her words.  
This is when I thought  
silence would protect me.*

With mature courage Reigns is able to relate more serious types of abusive behavior while still maintaining that requisite cage of silence that was his home:

#### **JOSH**

*Age eleven, at summer's end,  
I watched my thin redheaded neighbor change  
from bathing suit to Boy Scout uniform.  
Watched his naked body,  
marveled at the freckled pigment.  
The strongest image was when  
he stepped into his white underwear.  
I glimpsed the barely-hidden hole of his ass.  
Large, puckered, swollen – slight bruises on his hips.*

*After seeing gay pornography for the first time seven years later  
I was able to recognize what I had seen.  
His little boy's ass had been used.  
Who was taking advantage of him?  
His father? Brother? Boy Scout leader?  
If he would have confided in me,  
I wouldn't have thought such actions were odd.  
After all, it was happening to me.  
I thought every boy carried these secrets.*

But Reigns moves on beyond childhood experiences such as these, developmentally important or bruising as they were, and is able to step into the world of proximity to others who shared his proclivities. Some of these experiences are tainted by the insecurities of persistent memories:

#### **ARE YOU EMBARRASSED TO BE SEEN WITH ME?**

*I asked the question,  
a common question in the house I grew up in.  
I looked to my friend for an answer,  
who cringed at the question,  
cringed at what lay under it,  
cringed at my abandon when asking.  
The unconsciousness of it all,  
the lack of anything but my looks to define me.  
"Would you be embarrassed to be seen with me?"  
She alters her pursed mouth and smiles slightly.  
The facial expression a mother would give to a foolish child,  
"Steven, you never need to ask that question again."  
It was the first time I questioned the question  
that I had never asked to anyone else  
but my parents and the mirror.*



100% [excerpt]

..... My grandfather,  
a man  
who pats my head,  
rubs my back,  
kisses my cheek,  
tells me he loves me,  
and hopefully,  
isn't ashamed that other men do the same.

And as Reigns moves on into being openly gay, trying relationships, longing for others, he still is able to relate his responses in citing truths, because for him truth is more interesting than fiction. With candor and courage he speaks of the inequities of power. In his words, 'Secrets are some of the worst things to inherit and I don't intend to leave any behind in my will.'

#### **WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO PAY FOR THAT WITH? YOUR GOOD LOOKS?**

It was said as a reminder  
to keep my desires in place.  
Tongue-in-check implication was my looks weren't  
enough to be of value.  
That I had nothing else besides the poor quality of my face.  
It was also a hint at their unwillingness to pay for things  
standard in the role of a parent.

Their saying was always present,  
even when they weren't.  
It kept me impoverished, disempowered, wanting.

My idol in Miami  
reading and signing a book I longed to hear her read from.  
This was the biggest desire of my 22-year-old life,  
not knowing how I'd afford gas to get there.  
The mail came and I opened the envelope,  
a check for my modeling underwear at a club.  
I thought of my parents.  
I wanted to dial the phone and answer the question.

Yes.

#### **EX' S WEBPAGE**

I fumble onto my recent ex's webpage.  
A page designed to solicit sex.  
I feel uneasy.  
It starts off, "Hi, guys!"  
and I think how he is now courting en masse.  
How nothing is sacred,  
that what he shared with me will be shared with all.  
But I am not naïve.  
There is nothing physically I could have given him  
that I had not given to others.  
And I think about what was between us,  
how after we broke up we had sex.  
The motions void of the unbridled emotions  
we had once felt for one another.  
He wrote that he is "not choosy"

and my ego's bruise blackens.

#### **THE DEAD**

I read his obituary.  
Not only will he never  
breathe, eat, or sleep,  
he will never fuck.  
I remember the hot tub,  
his wandering hands,  
and I feel honored  
to have shared that with him.

I've shared sex  
with so many  
who are now dead,

been there to give a moment of pleasure  
to a shortened life.

Knowing them in ways  
their mourning mothers couldn't have known.  
Knowing their bodies  
not like the back of my hand or hometown  
but as a quick destination I'd visit  
for adventure, excitement, ejaculation.

I knew their bodies  
when they had pulses,  
when their heartbeats quickened  
and their chests heaved  
with the intensity of orgasm.  
To desire them now feels odd  
as the very vessel  
I lusted for decomposes.

And when one of our sexual scenes  
flashes through my mind during masturbation,

I appease my guilt,  
remind myself  
that this is a away I knew them.

An ex-lover's way  
of honoring the dead  
and honoring the places I touched  
that cannot be touched again.

Excerpting poems from a collection as powerful as INHERITANCE is more than a challenge for a reviewer, deciding which poems best isolate varied moments of life experiences, choosing some because they are so eloquently written, mourning the exclusion of others that may have provided friendly bridges for others. Steven Reigns has gained awards in the past and will undoubtedly be garnered more in the future. But there is another role he has assumed that validates his position as both a fine poet and a caretaker of the human spirit: Reigns organized and taught the first-ever autobiography poetry workshop for GLBT seniors, publishing their writings in a volume MY LIFE IS POETRY. He has extended his honest narrative to encourage others to follow. And that is a gift.

# Aaron Morgan Brown

[www.ambpaintings.com](http://www.ambpaintings.com)



## AARON MORGAN BROWN

has developed a form of visual philosophy that is truly unique in the field of painting. His subjects range from complex allegorical compositions to moody interiors, from nontraditional still life to the animal kingdom. He is an artist who disregards boundaries, living comfortably in the borderlands between the physical and metaphysical.

Brown received his BFA from the University of Kansas, and his MFA from Syracuse University, graduating summa cum laude from both institutions and earning a coveted University Fellowship from SU. He has received many awards, including prestigious grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation and the Franz and Virginia Bader Fund. He has participated in numerous exhibitions internationally, including a 2010 solo show at 101/Exhibit in Miami. His work has been featured in publications such as *New American Paintings* and *Harper's* magazine. He currently lives and works in Pennsylvania.









*Girl with Doll in WWI Museum* oil on panel 8"x12"



*Incident In A  
Department Store no.  
1: An Acquired Taste*  
oil on canvas  
34"x60"

"My paintings are pictorial orchestrations, views of a parallel interior universe that are sewn together from daily observations, memories, impressions of the world at large, and my imagination. They are both a prismatic lens through which I can re-view the world, and a transcription of what I encounter there. I'm attracted to the evocative aspects of an image, its power to suggest something beyond appearances."

AARON MORGAN BROWN





## Q&A AARON MORGAN BROWN

### **Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

The preparation of the support and ground has a certain ritualistic ambience. I make my own stretchers and panels, and while I'm constructing them I often fall into a meditative state of mind. I consider the tabula rasa of

the new surface, and the heightened sense of possibility gives me an adrenaline rush. It's an initial jolt that helps prepare me to stare down my own limitations during the painting process.

### **What is your pet peeve regarding today's art scene?**

Do I have to choose just one? The art scene is a monster with many heads. Seeing it whole causes permanent brain damage, so artists are forced to confront it piecemeal. Each head has its own distinct character. Some are charming or persuasive, others monolithic, unfriendly, and generally





LEFT:  
*The Advocate*  
oil on canvas  
35"x52"

grotesque. It enables some, chews up others, ignores most, and operates according to a set of arcane bylaws. There's nothing about it that is genuinely supportive. For that, artists must look to their friends, loved ones, and above all themselves.

**How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?**

Marrying another painter seemed like a terrible idea, but I'm happy to say I did it anyway. Obviously, the right

painter and person came along, someone who compliments my temperament. Together we confirm our mutual ideals, and allow for growth and change. Our private crits are great fun, unlike the crits I had in grad school. We talk nuts and bolts, influence and inspire each other. Having a partner who shares my weird vocation and understands with my ambitions takes some of the stress out of living.

**How has digital accessibility come into play with your work?**

Technology makes certain things possible, and I utilize it when I can. Submitting work online to galleries and publications in other cities is fast and convenient. Opportunities can be found through the various art deadline lists, and so forth. Of course, I'm not impressed with every aspect of the digital realm. This golden age of connectivity that we have created



Stage 3: The Errant Prince oil on canvas 48"x72"

seems ironically impersonal. It's depressing to think that future generations will study art history primarily by looking at digital images. On the other hand, the only way I can keep up with contemporary painting is via the web. It's a trade-off, as per usual.

**Have you ever edited your work or censored anything for fear of offending someone?**

I have experienced prolonged periods of doubt, and have found myself on the brink of self-censorship, which is a very dangerous trap. My work is rarely offensive, but it is often multilayered and ambiguous, and some people find that confusing or threatening (or both). They

seem to have trouble accepting the mysterious or the fanciful, particularly when things are depicted in a relatively "realistic" manner. It's as if they forget that they are looking at a painting. They want to know what the definitive "story" is, how it all adds up — which is too bad, because I'm not an illustrator. A prescribed explanation defeats my purpose, which is all about cultivating a field of free ranging associations.

**Do you believe art should serve a political purpose or remain neutral?**

I will answer that question like the chimera I am: it should have a

balanced diet of both. I am not being evasive, merely non-dualistic. This is a political planet, and art will inevitably reflect that, one way or another. Just because you claim to have purely formal intentions does not place you on Olympus, above the fray of conflicting human interests. At the same time, I find overtly political art to be curiously ineffective, and often a bore. Such obvious tactics seems best suited for a podium, billboard or TV ad. Ideally, one should temper content with formality, and vice versa.

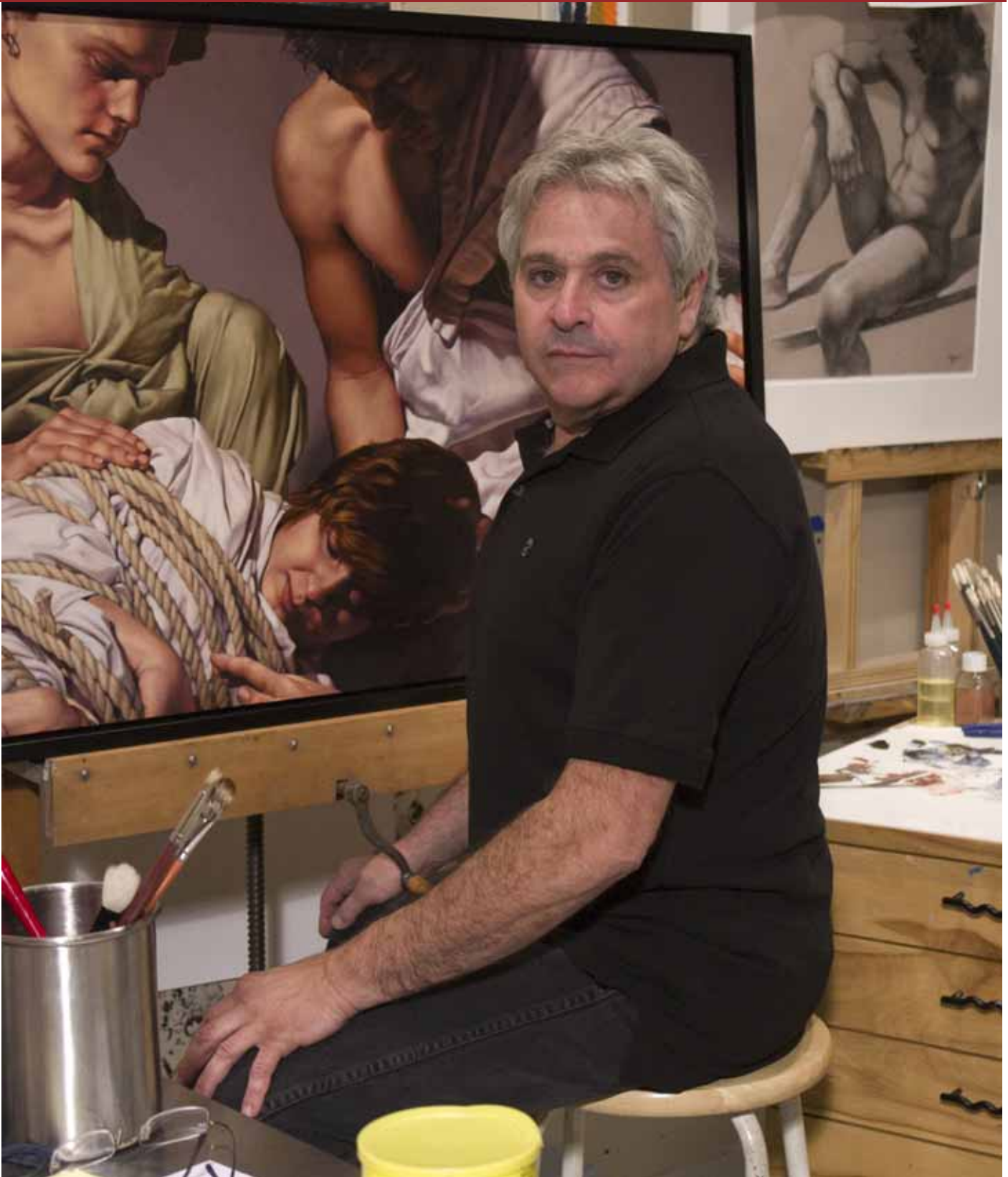
**Why are you a painter?**

My plan to become the world's first tap dancing neurosurgeon didn't work out.



# Robert Schefman

[www.robertschefman.com](http://www.robertschefman.com)







*Allegory (supporting my compulsive behavior)* oil 28"x46"

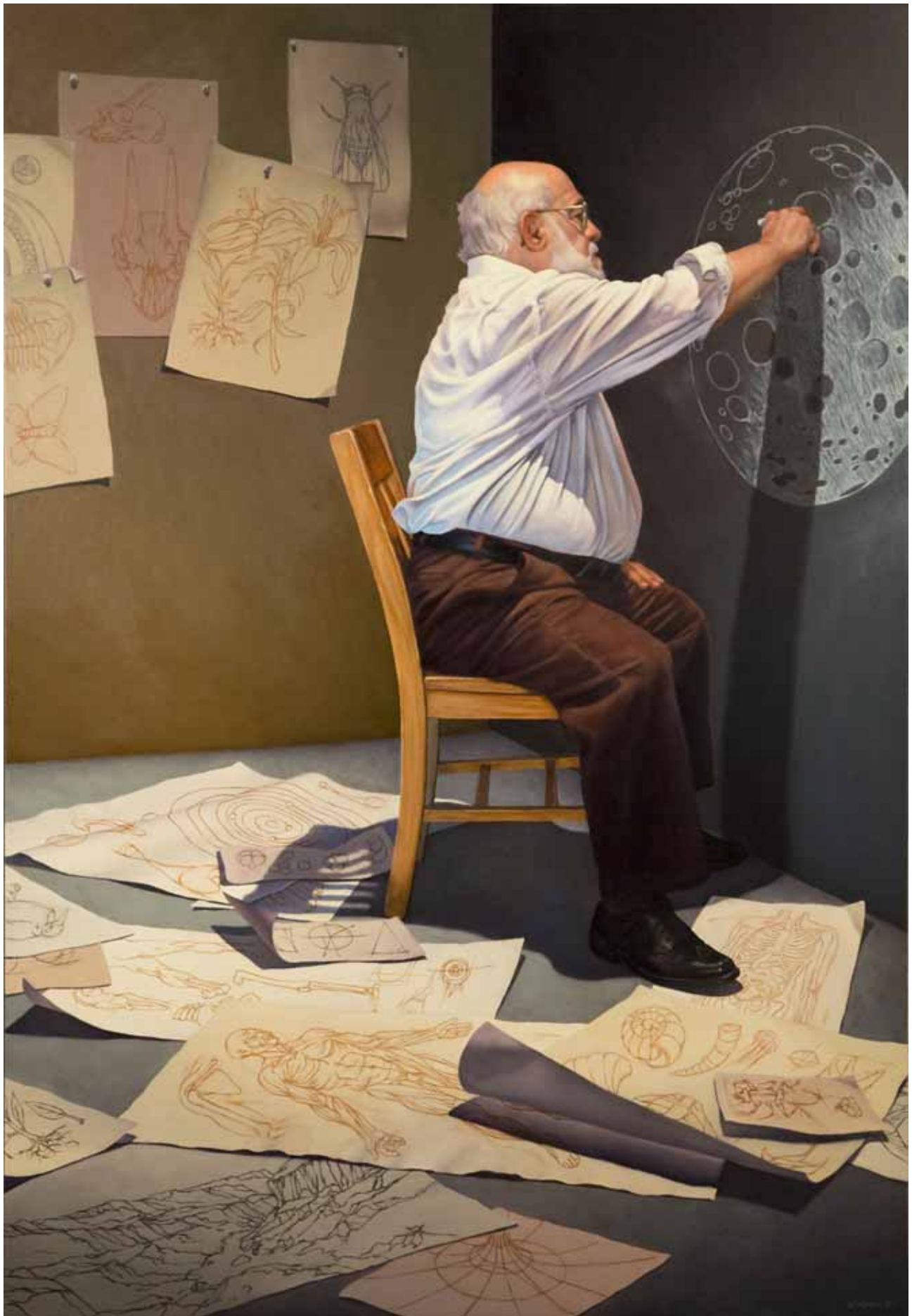
ROBERT SCHEFMAN, a native of Detroit, Michigan, earned a BFA from Michigan State University and an MFA from the University of Iowa. He lived in New York City for thirteen years before returning to the Detroit area.

He has been awarded grants from the Pollack-Krasner Foundation, the Benard Maas Foundation and the Arts Foundation of Michigan. Recent exhibitions include The Fort Wayne Museum of Art, IN, Timothy Yarger Fine Art, Beverly Hills, CA, Manifest Research Gallery, Cincinnati, R Wells Gallery, Binghamton, NY, 101/ exhibit, Miami, FL, and the Robert Kidd Gallery, Birmingham, MI.

His works were most recently featured in articles and the cover of *American Art Collector*, *Inca5*, *Zen Monster* and *Manifest Volume Thirty Nine*. His works are in the collections of The Detroit Institute of Arts, The Boca Raton Museum of Art and The Ford Performing Arts Center, Dearborn, MI.

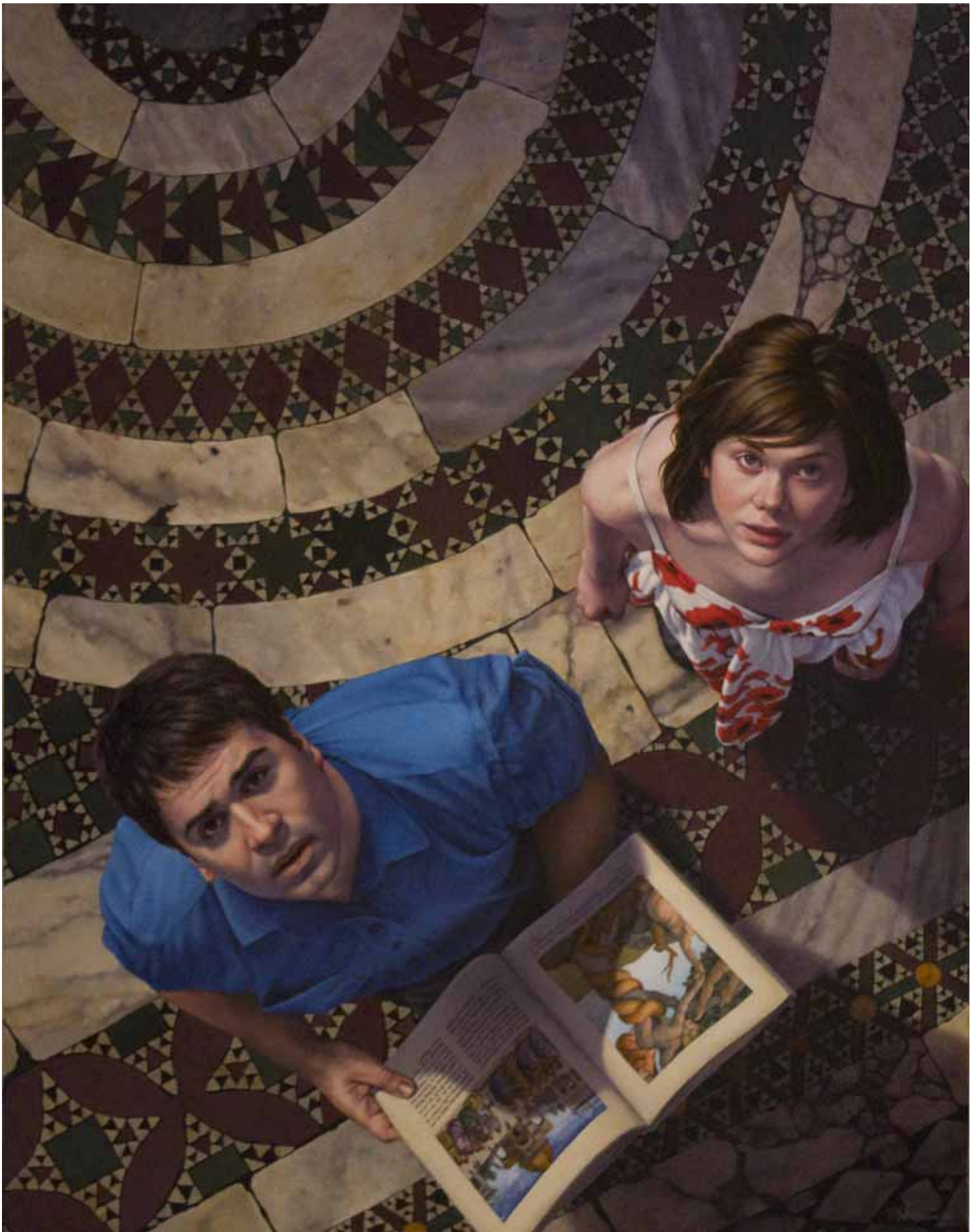
Schefman is currently Chair of the Foundations Department at The College for Creative Studies in Detroit.

“My paintings and drawings continue to feed a fascination with connecting threads in social fabric, while the illusionist format points to its continuity by reminding the viewer of the unchanging reality of sight.” ROBERT SCHEFMAN



*Intelligent Design* oil 64"x44"





*Tourism* oil 46"x36"





*A Day At The Met* oil 54"x36"

## Q&A ROBERT SCHEFFMAN

### **Do you believe art should serve a political purpose or remain neutral?**

Art is politics. It is communication between the artist and the viewer. The artist takes a point of view from the moment of conception; challenging conventional mores, promoting the status quo, even documenting nature or the human condition is a statement on form, content and values. Richard Serra's work sited for Federal Plaza, New York points out how political an object can become, even when it tries to avoid subject matter.

### **Have you ever edited your work or censored anything for fear of offending someone?**

I have had police censor work as patrons entered an exhibition. My

work has been destroyed, covered and pulled down at different exhibitions, though there is nothing inherently offensive or pornographic in my work. I questioned myself at first, but came to the conclusion that self-censorship is the worst result of such an experience. My job is to make the clearest statement I am able, on any subject. Altering work to suit my grandmother, your brother or the City Attorney is antithetical to the very premise of making art and can only diminish any observation or statement I could make.

### **What is your pet peeve regarding today's art scene?**

I see too many artists using news and magazine photographs as source material. Rather than go

out and research, think about a subject and how to treat it, they take someone else's work. The original artist took all of the risk, made all of decisions that interpreted the experience, and defined a point of view as they created their work. Playing Beethoven's 5th, can be wonderful, but it is still Beethoven. Make your own source material, have the experience and draw your own conclusions.

### **How has digital accessibility come into play with your work?**

I work with digital tools all the time. It is an integral part of the business. Images and documents, promotional materials and mailing, maintaining a website, even selling work from the web. I still do my ideation in a sketchbook, I find it



*Sistine Assistants* oil 56"x72"

much faster, and a more open process. However, I have always maintained an "image bank" that I draw on for material. Digital photography has really cut costs and time. Likewise, documenting and storing images of completed work is easier, faster and cheaper. I use a drawing program on my iphone, which is more for fun, but I did the preliminary work for one of my paintings this way.

I use Photoshop to help with color variations and choices. I also use it with my photo source material as required, since my models always seem to have some place else to be. It has been a great teaching tool. Digital image pixilation helps demonstrate to students how colors in a painting change constantly in every direction. Each brushstroke a pixel, together

forming an illusion.

**What tool or supply can you not live/work without?**

My great aunt was a sculptor and painter. When I began my career, she passed along her reducing glass. It is a marvelous tool for sculpture and painting. Much like the lens a director looks through while setting a shot, a reducing glass gives a new perspective on your work. Like turning a canvas upside down, or using a digital camera to register the work in black and white, it is another way to approach objectivity.

**Why are you a painter?**

I am a painter because that is where my work led me. I have always followed the work. That is, I take something away from a piece that becomes a reason to make

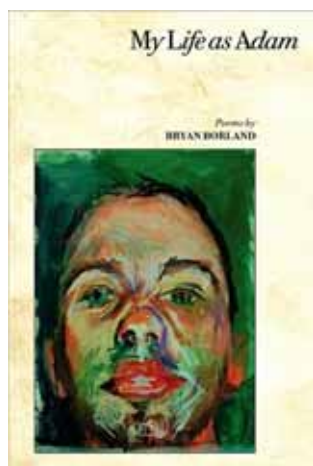
the next. All avenues, elements and principles are open for change. My training was all sculpture. I made large scale, non-objective works, which over time explored form as a language metaphor. Eventually, I was drawn to forms that could express more specific content than non-objective sculpture could deliver. Site-inspired representational sculpture created at the ancient gates of Troy, Turkey was a highlight, but still felt once removed. I explored the same mythological content in two dimensions and found more possibilities in painted illusion than three-dimensional reality. It might seem strange, but the transition seemed a natural outgrowth of the work. Teaching myself to paint was another issue.



# Bryan Borland: *MY LIFE AS ADAM*

**“He who loves his brother abides in the light and in him there is no cause of stumbling.”**

*The Bible, Book of John*



cover art by  
Seth Ruggles Hilier

**‘YOU HAVE TO** have been there...’ No, this insensitive statement regarding whether or not the reader can or would understand the depth of feeling of a journeyman is shattered in Bryan Borland’s intensely honest and painfully lovely book of poems, *MY LIFE AS ADAM*. Bryan Borland is a gay poet, writing from experiences and developmental thought patterns that have defied the at times Sisyphean steps to becoming a sexually liberated male. He enters his world as a nascent, ambiguous ADAM and returns at the end a fully developed MAN. He begins:

## ***My life as Adam***

*In the beginning, I was the first on Earth  
to feel this way, born*

*from the dust of the ground, the salt  
of my father, hungry for graven images of myself,*

*awakening from shameful dreams  
ripping bone from my new body,*

*a boy carrying mankind’s progeny  
in sweaty psalms.*

*In the beginning, I tilled the garden, planting  
seeds of normalcy that never grew,*

*Ever-present voices inventing sin,  
threats of banishment in booths meant for confession:*

*It is no good for man  
to be alone*

*When he discovers his soul  
is between his legs.*

While other authors have occultly coped with homosexuality – writers such as Thomas Mann, Henry James, EM Forster, and Herman Melville – Borland emerges, not from a retrospective speculation or latter day unveiling of truths that were always there, quietly shrouded in correctness, but from an immediate stance, his home in Little Rock, Arkansas, a place where the dimensions of religion, family, and sexuality



photo by Mandy Simino

are more rigidly drawn, perhaps, than on the coastal bifurcations of a country still at war with individual rights and freedoms. He shares his struggles with the early duplicity of dating girls:

## ***Grapes are the perfect food***

*was what we said to each other at  
tense moments, which might have been*

*often, which might have been  
the whole relationship, how many years*

*I’ve forgotten but I do remember  
holding hands in public, or how*

*we’d order an appetizer at a restaurant  
and she’d serve me before herself.*

*If it weren’t for the sex  
we might have made a go of it, lasted*

*beyond those early college classes  
where I learned Christianity*

*was not the only religion, where  
a boy named Jonathan turned me on*

*to matzah brei and kugel  
and I couldn’t get enough.*

Borland deals gently, if with some pain, with the process heretofore known as ‘coming out’ – a phrase science and intellect have quashed with the examination of DNA positions on our genetic helices that mark our characteristics as we move from infancy toward adulthood. He writes of awakening feelings and early experiences, at times believed to be one-sided on the surface, a lost moment forgotten, but in retrospect lightening the dark room of being alone, incapable of feeling or defining or expressing love.

## ***Shoulder***

*On the thirty-minute drive  
between his bedroom and mine,  
cloaked in the redeeming glow  
of dashboard lights,  
he spoke of his crush on  
a classmate named Ben  
and of how homosexuality  
exists even in canines.*



*My straight friend,  
clumsy and thoughtful,  
embracing me  
before I could embrace myself.*

And while other poets may flail at the 'ties that bind', Borland instead explores them with the gentlest sense of understanding and belonging that family and religion have defined as normalcy. He paints the atmosphere in which he grew, the cloudy homophobia making dark his possibility of self-recognition and esteem.

### **Queer Progression**

*Two twenty-something men on MTV,  
a kiss behind apartment building bricks.  
Queer was a New York City thing. I don't know  
how many sidekicks slipped by unnoticed,*

*don't know when I began to pay attention to  
bottom corners in the back of dirty magazines,  
to junior high teases that hurt like gospel.  
Manhattan skies were grey on television,*

*crowded, cold, boy-heat breathing.  
In Arkansas our winters were mild.  
The Bible and TIME on our coffee table,  
Ellen DeGeneres, Yup, I'm Gay.*

*I couldn't look her in the eyes.*

*We were always changing channels in my house.*

Lust – more easily explored, recalled, fantasized – too often, he opines, replaced love/embrace/touch/need.

### **Watching Brokeback Mountain in Little Rock**

*... 'In Arkansas we see two men kiss  
and turn away. There's no  
affection on rural streets,  
just pickup trucks and  
rednecks on our breath.  
In the temple of theater,  
we are studied, two men  
sitting too close, legs touching the way  
our hands cannot.  
We watch and recognize,  
tune out the action movie stigma  
bleeding through the walls.*

Bryan Borland is one of the few poets who is able to so deftly define the thin line between straight and gay, especially addressing the totems and rituals that are designed to introduce the afterwards.

### **There was a moment of tenderness**

*...After his surgery,  
I skipped school to drive him home.  
In the cold, broad daylight  
the warmth of his hand startled me.  
It was the medication talking  
or maybe I misheard  
when he slurred words  
that made us equals.  
It was weakness  
when he offered me his wounded smile,  
how I sped from validation,  
and returned us to a familiar territory,  
stories of sex with his girlfriend  
while she was on the rag.*

But he is equally able to present the joy of finding a life partner/husband as in

### **Shopaholic**

*We sleep in a tight squeeze  
until we can afford  
a larger bed.*

*Husband, dear,  
why do you think I spend our pay  
on exotic herbs  
and good chocolate?*

*If every dime we save  
is an inch you're apart from me in the night  
our grocery lists will remain long,  
our cupboard well stocked.*

and turn as compassionately to memories of victims of AIDS or early deaths or other tragedies as in

### **Angels of Chernobyl**

*They pay money to see a gaping wound  
in the city, Ground Zero, New York,*

*where camera flashes confuse visitors,  
whether to smile in the photographs*

*they ask strangers to take. Most do.  
In the Lower Ninth, tour buses*

*idle at shotgun houses with death  
painted on abandoned front doors.*

*I dated a boy once whose left arm  
had been mangled in a car accident.*

*In bed he shyly asked me to kiss  
his scars and shook in climax*

*at my breath against his skin.  
He doesn't resurface often,*

*but from time to time I receive postcards,  
the last from Ukraine, a picture*

*of a nuclear winter snow angel  
I pressed gently to my lips.*

When he sings of found loves he celebrates his hard won treasure, and when he has lost that love, as in 'Holden', 'The Book of David', or 'The Book of Joshua, Epilogue', he has learned more about commitment and perception than most will acknowledge. Borland's verse is free, shaped meaningfully on the page as though he were opening windows for fellow travelers to gain hold on a future that can be positive.

Bryan Borland's first book of his poems, MY LIFE AS ADAM, is his life and he owns it, a life of sensing, noticing, yearning for the bite of the forbidden apple where the fruit has been distorted by religions and codices of human behavior in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent him from acceptance of what he intuited would be beautiful. It is this journey to date he sensitively shares – like that little beggar along the path who smiles at our shackles and says *thank you* in a way that changes us – permanently.

# Victoria Selbach

[www.victoriaselbach.com](http://www.victoriaselbach.com)



Photo by Sam Garcia

VICTORIA SELBACH, at an early age studied drawing and pastel at the Carnegie Mellon Museum of Pittsburgh and then continued on to art classes at Carnegie Mellon University. She moved to New York City and graduated from Parsons School of Design. In 2008 Victoria's images exploded into strikingly modern, larger than life heads that capture the individual's strength and subtle inner beauty. Her current work, 'Nudes' emphasizes her focus on the use of light to create powerful graphic compositions. Victoria has two upcoming shows this fall; 'Intimate Perspectives' Muroff Kotler Gallery SUNY Ulster, Stone Ridge, NY September 10 - October 1, 2010 and 'Women: Portraits and Nudes' a solo exhibition BNH, 321 East 73 Street, NY NY. The opening reception is October 6 from 6-8PM. The show will run through October 30, 2010.







Nude 5 acrylic on canvas 48"x24"

## Q&A VICTORIA SELBACH

### **How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?**

So much of who I am or who I have become is tied to those I love. Family, my community of friends and our physical environment absolutely allows and informs every stroke. When I first came to New York, escaping from the sun and hay of a semi rural childhood, I craved the hard city, its dark nights spotted with bright lights, chaos and disorder. NY at that time had a rougher edge that energized everything. That energy was home for many years and I couldn't imagine flourishing without it. Life unfurls with many wonderful turns and I find myself today surrounded by greenery and dappled light, with family and friends deeper and richer than ever. Luxuriating in this imbues my work. What I paint couldn't exist outside it. Should the family life change drastically, I would still paint, but the impact would be tremendous. The work would be completely different. There is no separating what we breath and what we paint.

### **What tool or supply can you not live/work without?**

The Light. I can be focused on the darkest corner of a painting, but it's the light that brings me to it. The light frames the whole experience, informs every aspect of the image and somehow moves the paint onto the canvas. It may be the single biggest influence on my current work. It's the supply of day to day light that fills and inspires. Without it I slow down. Stepping outside, looking up and breathing in the light is an inspiration that rejuvenates and nourishes.

### **Do you collect any art yourself and if so what, if anything, was the first piece you sold or gave to someone?**

We have a small collection of German expressionist woodcuts. My husband prefers the boys of Die Brücke, but I'm a diehard Kathe Kollwitz fan. Ever since I wept my way through her museum in Cologne she has moved to the very top of my list. Most of what overflows the house is collected works by friends and family. What we give is always made with our own hands. Our friendship is usually accompanied by a grand dose of gregarious dinner parties and the occasional gift of my husbands prints, tiles and handmade paper works.

### **What painting do you have hanging in your living room?**

Things move around quite a bit but at the moment an early impressionistic portrait I did of my husband, Michael, hangs in one corner. Next to it is a Schmidt-Rottluff woodblock print of a man reading. Two of Michael's prints hang near by. My favorite Kathe



Nude 4 acrylic on canvas 24"x30"

Kollwitz, 'The Mothers', has a place of honor. Facing this is a large nude self portrait which sometimes flips out for a hand made paper relief of a room which my husband gave me when we were dating. Lastly a hand colored etching by a friend, Hanno Ahrens. Then there are the many carvings and sculptures ... sounds like a lot but it's not nearly as crowded as say Brancusi's work room.

#### **What is your preferred medium and why?**

I choose to transfer what I see and feel through the act of moving paint onto canvas. I could love photography as a 'medium' but then I would miss that slow push pull of bringing the image out of the canvas and the tactile joy of building the pigment with a brush. I use acrylic to carry the pigment. The ability to build color in layers, with very little waiting time, works well for my approach of layering the pigment to create a sense of transparency and depth. There was a time I felt I needed

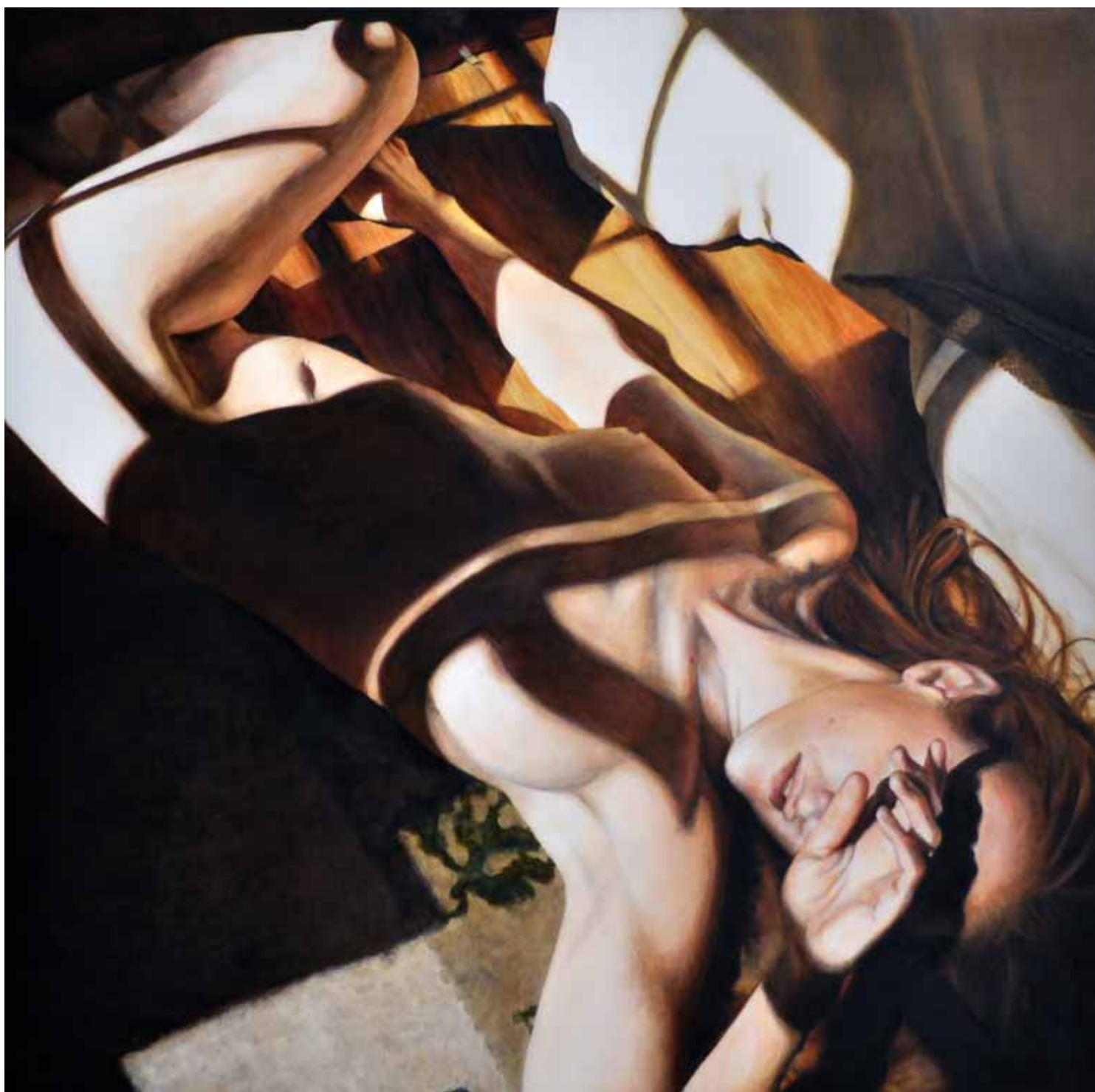
the acrylic to keep me moving quickly lest I dally and never progress. I now can see the temperament of the paint may be the least of my issues with speed. I am curious to discover what I may be building into the painting that can be eliminated without losing depth and dimension while strengthening it's clarity.

#### **Do you have a ritual you follow before each new work is started?**

I've been painting my Nudes in clusters so the ritual can start way before the piece with the dance between the concept and the muse. That first session creates a vision that will carry me through 3-4 paintings. Then at the start of every day it's the 'getting there' that really feels like a ritual. I drive from the house to the studio. Lately that's been on an old beat up motor scooter. I cruise a short distance to a windy road where a cover of dense greenery scatters sunlight all around me. That ride feels like heaven to me.

#### **Have you ever edited your work or censored anything for fear of offending someone?**

In the realm of potentially offensive art it seems ridiculous to think that my paintings could offend. Fear cannot come into play. Each time I approach the canvas I must believe I am painting what I see. Even in the early stages, when I sometimes lay down bizarrely bright undertones, I paint because I know I see those colors under the surface. If a piece is built day to day with this integrity, once it is finished it has an honesty that I need not doubt or censor. A dear friend was once quite surprised to find I had painted her with a 'long pointy' nose. She may not yet understand that it is exactly her nose, from that angle, the nose I was seeing. Quite often, given how beautiful my muse appears on the canvas, viewers assume I have enhanced reality. That couldn't be more from the truth. I do not flatter. I paint what I see.



*Nude 3* acrylic on canvas 36"x36"

“Light moves across the canvas, weaving through the form, penetrating dimensions beneath the surface, revealing emotion held deep within, collides with shadow and recedes into darkness.”

VICTORIA SELBACH





*Nude 1* acrylic on canvas 36"x48"



#### **Introspective: *Nude 1***

After completing a series of larger than life heads I wanted the challenge of pulling away from the face, completely resetting my focus on the tension and angles of the body. With 'Nude 1' I took that step and began what continues to define my current work. Although the mind is tuned to see the woman first and drawn to the human form, in these works the impact of the underlying abstraction, created by the light, fights for dominance. Cropping closely into the body without emphasis on the face or eyes seems to shift the paradigm towards the stark geometry of light and dark that creates the architecture of the piece. Focusing on the body offered the reward of a broader playground to watch the light roll across the canvas. The subject is revealed as the light weaves through the figure, brushing against surfaces, announcing volume, creating depth and illuminating the layers beneath the surface. The light moves through the painting abstracting and alternately revealing what is present.

Victoria Selbach Photo by Sam Garcia

# Eric Wert

[www.werteric.com](http://www.werteric.com)

**ERIC WERT** was born in Portland, Oregon in 1976. He received a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Northwestern University. He currently paints full time from his studio in Portland. His work has been shown across the U.S. and in Europe. In the last decade, he has had ten solo exhibits and has participated in over forty group exhibitions. He has been featured in numerous publications, including *American Art Collector*, *New American Paintings* and *Artists Magazine*. Public collections include the New Britain Museum of American Art, in Connecticut, and the Illinois State Museum. He is represented by William Baczek Fine Arts in Northampton, Massachusetts, and currently has work on display with Sullivan Goss in Santa Barbara, and Evoke Contemporary in Santa Fe.







*Roses & Hobnail* oil on panel 24"x18"







## Q&A ERIC WERT

### Explain your process.

A painting like *Deluge* often begins years before the painting is started. I'll have an idea of what I want, but it can take forever to find just the right subjects to make it work. The vase was bought in Thailand by friends. They weren't willing to let me shatter it, so I bought a cheap vase and used that to study the broken ceramic structure.

I start by arranging the still life and take hundreds of digital photos at many different exposures. Each element is shot from several angles to get a sense of the volume of the subject. Using photos and sketches, I get an idea of what the scale of the composition will be. The painting begins with a very fluid line drawing where I can take the time to make adjustments to the

composition. When the composition seems to work, I generally develop the painting piece by piece rather than as a whole. For *Deluge*, I started with the background and finished it before moving to the foreground elements. I have tried working the entire canvas in the past, but with complicated subjects I need to finish each element individually or I lose concentration.

Often my favorite part is at the end. When the painting starts to feel "real", I'll put away the still life objects and the photographs and respond to the reality in the painting. At this point the painting seems to take on a personality of its own. I try not to be too analytical, and just react to what the painting wants to be fully realized and complete.

### Do you have a ritual you follow

*Uzumaki* oil on panel 6"x8"



*Deluge* oil on canvas 48"x60"







*Dahlias* oil on panel 30"x40"

**before each new work is started?**

When I finish a painting, I clean my studio well, get a haircut, and tend to all the aspects of my life that have been ignored for the previous weeks or months. I usually have a new piece composed and ready to go before the previous one is finished. When a painting is done, it can leave me feeling directionless and depressed because I've been so focused. Having a new project to transition into right away helps keep the momentum going.

**How does your family life come into play with your artistic life?**

My wife is a magazine editor and a fiber artist. As an editor, she takes a hard and critical look at my works in progress. It can hurt the ego when she dissects something

I've been working on for days, but her honest eyes are always invaluable in retrospect. As a fiber artist, for years she would drag me along with her to fabric stores. Over time, I began to appreciate the fabrics and patterns and they are now an integral part of my paintings. Now I'm the one who drags her to the fabric store.

**Do you collect any art yourself and if so what, if anything, was the first piece you sold or gave to someone?**

My wife and I collect art from our friends and colleagues, as well as small works by artists we admire. We have an eclectic collection that ranges from realist still-life to fiber and textile art. As an artist, I have found it valuable to have the experience of buying work,

working with gallery owners, and being in the shoes of the collector. Having a collector's perspective has helped me in the studio to stay grounded and focused on making work that is striking at first sight, but also complex enough to be rewarding over many years. We buy pieces we'll want to look at every day; in my studio practice I strive to make work that is equally rewarding for others.

The first piece I gave as a gift was a painting of a Protea flower done in memory of my cousin, Elizabeth Bowers. The painting is now used as the logo for the Elizabeth Bowers Zambia Education Fund, which works to educate young women in the town where she worked as a Peace Corps volunteer. ([www.bethsgirls.org](http://www.bethsgirls.org))





*Citrus* oil on panel 22"x24"

**What tool or supply can you not live/work without?**

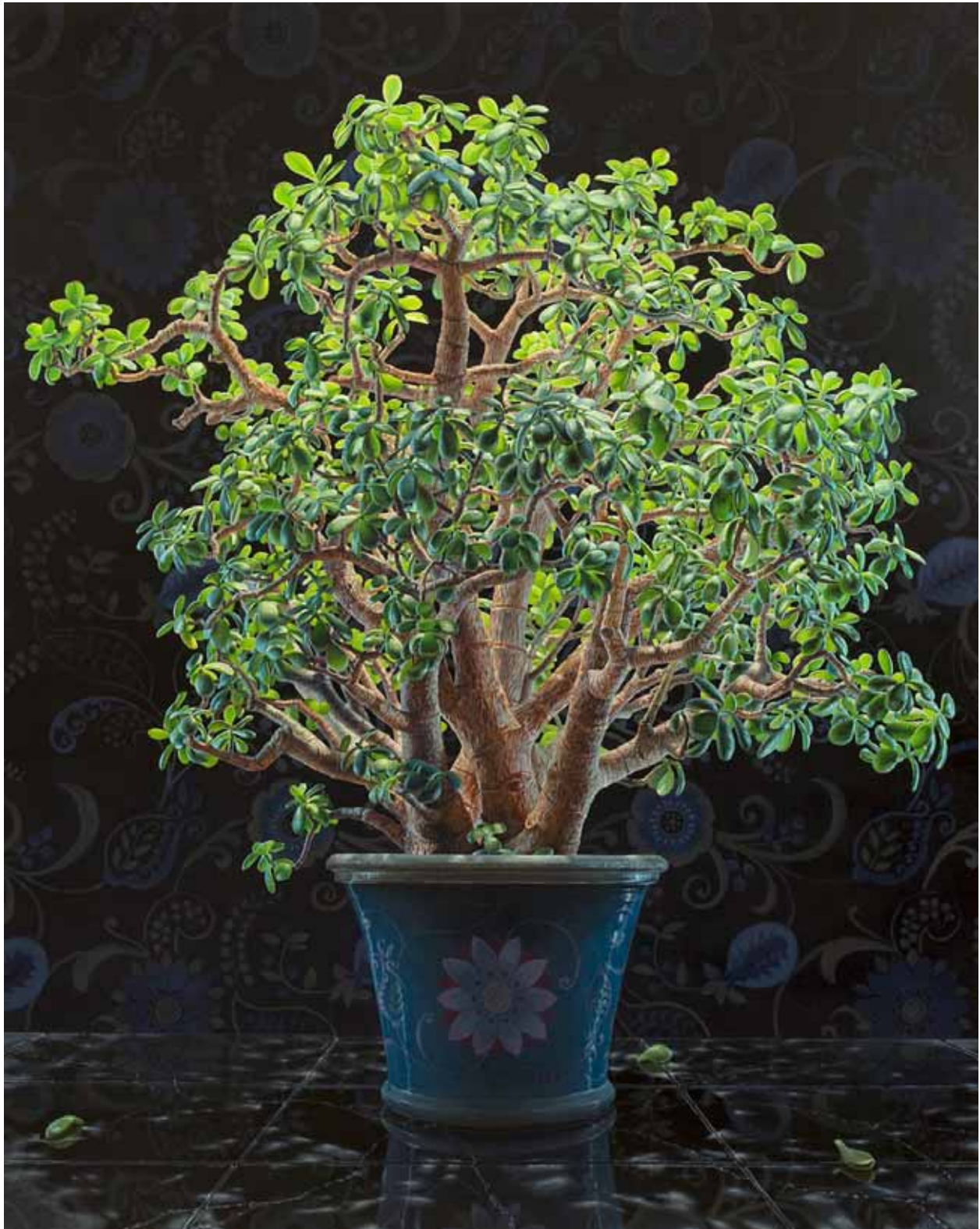
Along with coffee and cheap brushes, my computer has become an essential tool in the studio. I can use it to collage source images, with five or more views or exposures of the same subject on the screen at the same time. While I like to refer to reality when possible, digital photos are so helpful when working with perishable subjects.

Access to the internet also provides a wealth of research options and subject matter. For example, I hid a salamander in my painting Dahlias and it was easy to find hundreds of images of a salamander species that was regionally appropriate to the subject flower species. Recently, I used an open source CAD program to solve a perspective problem that had been tormenting me for weeks!

**"I want to create an image that one can be lost within. To me, still life painting is about looking intensely, about intimately exploring a subject. I hope that my paintings can convey that sense of intensity and fascination."**

ERIC WERT





*Jade* oil on panel 50"x40"

#### INTROSPECTIVE: *JADE*

My most recent piece *Jade* was probably the most challenging to date. It was inspired by the 19th century German Romantic landscape painter Caspar David Friedrich, whose paintings of trees appear both majestic and ominous. As an American urban dweller, my everyday experience of nature is much more prosaic. *Jade* is an attempt to reflect Friedrich's iconic vision of sublime nature within a completely domestic object. The jade plant in this painting is a warm weather plant that has probably never even been allowed outdoors. When observed closely, even this innocuous houseplant can become a symbol of the complexity and mystery of nature.

The dramatic overhead lighting was intended to give *Jade* an almost religious glow from within, and also to showcase the translucency of the leaves. The horizon line of the painting is low to make the subject appear more imposing, and to draw the viewer up into the plant. While I wasn't expecting it to be easy, the painting ended up being more difficult than anticipated. I thought that a rhythm would evolve for painting the leaves of the jade. However, I was continually surprised by the amount of variation throughout the plant and I was forced to treat each leaf individually. Several months of painting hundreds of leaves, each with its own unique nuances of hue, texture and light, became a rigorous technical challenge as well as a test of endurance.



ERIC WERT



**ROHEENI SAXENA** is a young poet and writer who was born and raised in Washington, D.C.. She received her first formal training as a poet at the Iowa Young Writer's Workshop, and earned her BA from Wellesley College. She is currently living in New York City, where she is pursuing a Masters degree at Columbia University.

## Your souls and mine

Souls of my sisters are sinew and gravel so wily soft,  
stuck to each other with asphalt and powdered confectioner's  
sugar. Demanding attention like puppies and daisies do,  
growing dependent, as vines on deciduous trees tend to.

Father, his soul smells of pine and it readily burns, for it's  
stuffed full with ancient scraps, voided checks, magazines, photographs  
all dry and rubbing together with friction that's painfully  
cutting a track to his kidneys, with fire like knife stab wounds.

Mother is bubbles and chewing gum, floating away as the  
breezes pass, popping when updrafts fade. Building a fortress of  
boxes and bottles that have all been rotted through, just like wet  
leather they've wilted, and she stands alone on the kitchen floor.

Your soul was solid as redwood and hard as South African  
diamonds are. Shiny brass layers of lattice work, delicate,  
linked inextricably, laid without blueprints' guide, passing as  
yellow gold, barely. It's likely to topple with each new piece.

My soul is walking away from the forest, and into the  
afternoon sunlit grass. Molded from paste made of sawdust and  
filings of copper, then set in the chill of the open-doored Frigidaire.  
We are as bright as the ringing of parallel fourths in crescendo.





photo by Elizabeth Williams

**ROBERT LIETZ** is the author of eight published collections of poems, including *Running in Place* (L'Epervier Press,). *At Park and East Division* (L'Epervier Press,) *The Lindbergh Half-century* (L'Epervier Press,) *The Inheritance* (Sandhills Press,) and *Storm Service* (Basfal Books). Basfal also published *After Business in the West: New and Selected Poems*. Nearly seven hundred of his poems have been published in print and on-line journals, including recent publications in *Istanbul Literary Review*, *The Pittsburgh Quarterly Online*, *Avatar*, *Contrary*, *Terrain*, *Valparaiso Review*, *Salt River Review*, and *Lily*. Several unpublished collections are currently finished and ready for publication, including *West of Luna Pier*, *Spooking in the Ruins*, *Keeping Touch*, *Character in the Works: Twentieth Century Lives*, *The Vanishing*, and *Eating Asiago & Drinking Beer*. Meanwhile, he keeps active writing and exploring his interest in digital photography and image processing and their relationship to the development of his poetry.

## BOOMTOWNS

Sometimes you just accelerate, squeeze lightning  
to water and cold stone  
you need to rub again to warming. Think of that  
creepy ( otherwordly )  
science-fiction you subscribed to, and, other enough,  
the chapters of street poetry,  
defined by the winter rides and, all at once,  
imbibible / libationary,  
a lifetime sigh or sentence in becoming, subject  
to selection say, while --  
incendiary / inclining -- the woods shook weathers out,  
in shares to celebrate  
or marvel, to see how the ice-breakers then  
opened iced-over constellations,  
flaring the ways stars would, across the dark-starred  
panes become of boomtowns,  
where we were collected once, and thought ourselves  
bestowed in flaring up and spiraling,  
and as abstracted yet, as dolphins / vibraphones,  
as scholars everyone,  
amazed as we were that woods could glow like that  
and not be finished, because  
of that tilting it may be, and, as you may understand,  
the integral / appalling, if indispensable speeds  
and nighttimes closing in on an ambition, intent on  
some other season then,  
some other lightning, on snow field / thaw, on flooding  
and snow and flooding after all, this  
mottled-enough woods-bordered land, where  
nuggets asked pretending, until  
we supposed ourselves again, and the president  
struck out, studying his Petrarch,  
unhaunted by *who knows?*, or by the numbers  
say, by the dark and stillness  
and conditions, inspired by the eyes  
he never really opened,  
and, more surely, by another  
subject  
well within.

# Michele Del Campo

[www.micheledelcampo.com](http://www.micheledelcampo.com)



**MICHELE DEL CAMPO** was born in Sannicandro Garganico, small town in south Italy, in 1976. At twenty, after moving to Milan, he started studying Fine Arts but moved afterwards to the Illustration course in Dundee (UK), where he obtained his first degree in 2001. He continued studying Fine Arts in Madrid, where he graduated in 2007. By that time he had already had several solo exhibitions in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, having to combine the professional painting with the studies. In 2006 he was awarded the prestigious Premio BMW by Queen Sofia of Spain. In 2008 he moved to London and in this city he has had the last two solo exhibitions. His work has been featured, in some cases on covers, in national art magazines like The Artist, Art of England, Artists and Illustrators, Arte, Galleries and several more.





## Q&A MICHELE DEL CAMPO

### Explain your process.

After composing a rough image through various photographic references I print the result and, if it is going to be a big painting, I use a large grid to help me keep the proportions when drawing on the canvas. I like to have a certain

freedom on the canvas already from the drawing stage, so the grid must be as big as possible, often just a cross on the image will be enough to place the essential elements. I draw with a brush and a neutral earth colour. I keep the drawing very simple, just a

scheme, most of which will soon disappear under the first brushstrokes. It is when I apply the colour that I really start to define the forms.

I do not stick too much to the reference material but I apply the modifications that I feel necessary





*The Coming Storm* oil on linen 100x150cm

directly on the canvas, so the final painting can come out quite different from the original reference material.

I paint the background first and I carry on towards the foreground mostly using the technique "alla prima", trying to complete a whole











*Fallen Leaves* oil on linen 120x160cm

section of the painting in the same day. I use up to eight big palettes and keep all the colours that I have mixed on them until the end of the painting, just in case I will need to do some retouch with old colours at any point. I work with intensity on the painting until I finish it, only then I feel that I can rest. Sometimes, when I have completed a painting, I feel that I need to make some radical change. In some cases I find it easy to understand what I could do to improve it, in other cases I have to put the painting aside against the wall, I start working on a new one and, a few weeks later, I pull it out again to look at it with a fresher and more distant view. Sometimes this helps me to come out with good solutions to make it "work", some other time, more rarely, I feel that I just have to destroy it.

**What painting do you have hanging in your living room?**

I do not have any permanent painting hanging in my living room or in any other room in my flat. Usually I use all available walls to temporarily hang my latest paintings before sending them away for an exhibition, so they are changing all the time. This gives me time to "live" with my newest pieces for a while, in order to understand better myself, what I am doing and what I want to do next.

**Why are you a painter?**

Although I have always had a strong aptitude for drawing and painting, I never thought that I would become a professional painter, in my small town in South Italy I saw it too far from reach and I did not know anybody who had made it at certain levels. Now that I have managed to both cultivate my passion and live of it, I see painting as the most natural activity that I could do. However, although painting is perhaps my best means of communication, it is actually the need of being creative my strongest drive. There are, for example, periods of two or three consecutive months when I am not painting at all because I am resting from a hard working period preparing a solo exhibition,



but I feel that I have to engage myself in other creative activities. I think that these periods are like oxygen to my painting and to me, a chance to take a step back and see my work from a distance while I cultivate other activities like printmaking, life sketching, drawing and even sculpture sometimes. I need these activities because they offer me new creative points of view and help me generating new ideas.

Apart from this intrinsic need to be creative, I also think that if some people can feel something in front of my canvases, that is certainly a power that I should use to convey some message and share my feelings.

**How long does one of your pieces take to finish?**

Apart from the technical process of painting on a support, which can take from one day for a 40x40cm to two weeks for a 190x300cm, there are many previous processes that can never be quantified in terms of time because there are too many variables. The actual process of painting is relatively quick but it represents only the final part of a longer process that starts with the generation of a new ground for new ideas, the previous studies to define an image and, finally, the shaping of it in painting.

When I have to plan a new solo exhibition, for example, I like to embark into a new project and elaborate new ideas, a common thread for a new body of work. During two to four months, I sketch and search for inspiration. Then I get organized and gather reference material, later I give shape to the first sketchy composition for the first painting. At the end I decide the size, and, finally, I will start the painting. Even during the painting stage I can decide to step back and make more studies for modifications, so that also would prolong the time.

**How has digital accessibility come into play with your work?**

The internet is fundamental for creatives today, it projects a virtual world in the comfort of your

studio, it enriches your knowledge and provides a wide source of inspiration. If I need to add some elements in my paintings and I need to find a visual reference, I can search through the web and I often find what I need, instead of completely relying on my own references. Also, being able to have visual access to so many other artist's images can enhance the possibilities of a dialogue with the past and with the present. The danger with such an easy access is that the direct experience of the real things could be reduced to a minimum and we tend to forget that there is another dimension to things that cannot be appreciated in the realm of the virtual. In the case of a painting, the size, the

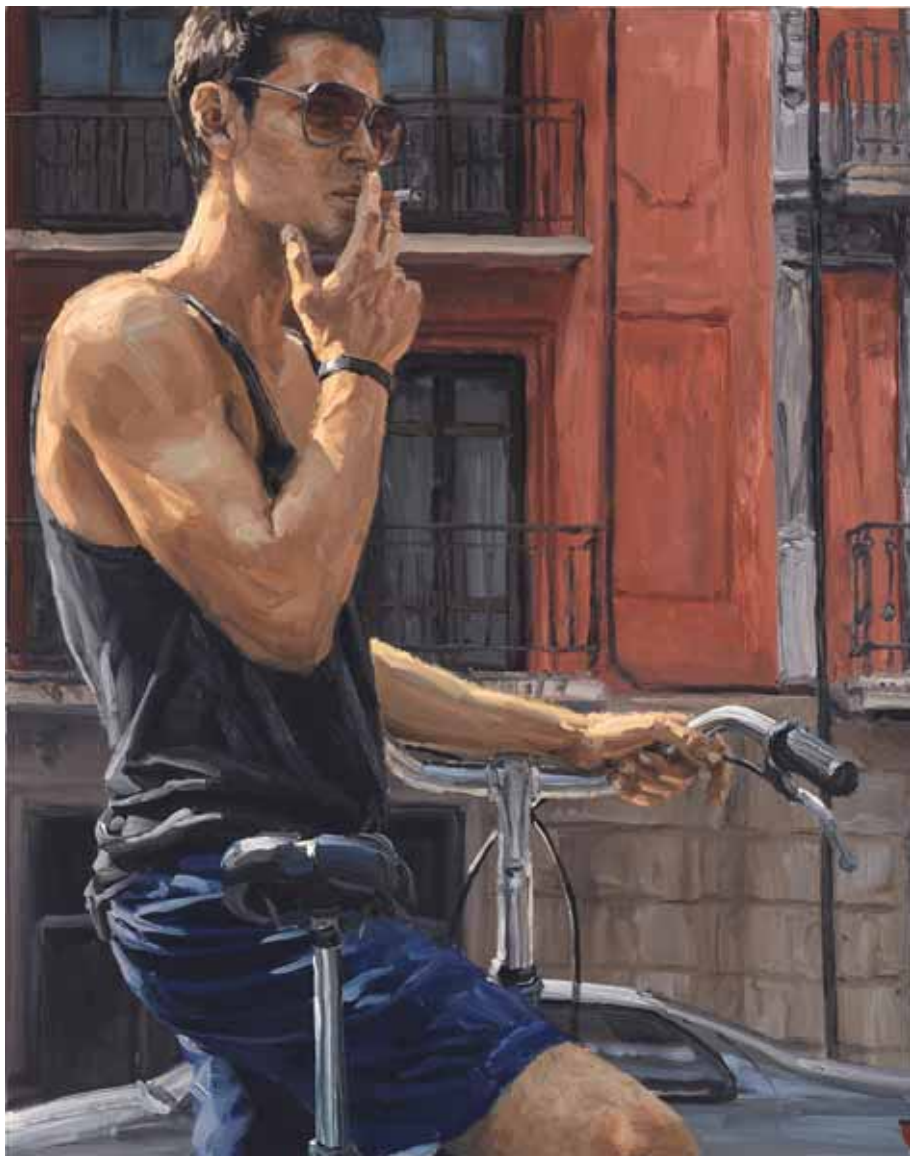
visual and tactile texture, the brush marks, the blend of colours and all the subtleties that can make the experience of watching a real painting very special. I think that it is important that people develop an awareness of this "lost dimension" and of the fact that not all styles of painting are penalised to the same degree when shown in a small and flat digital picture.

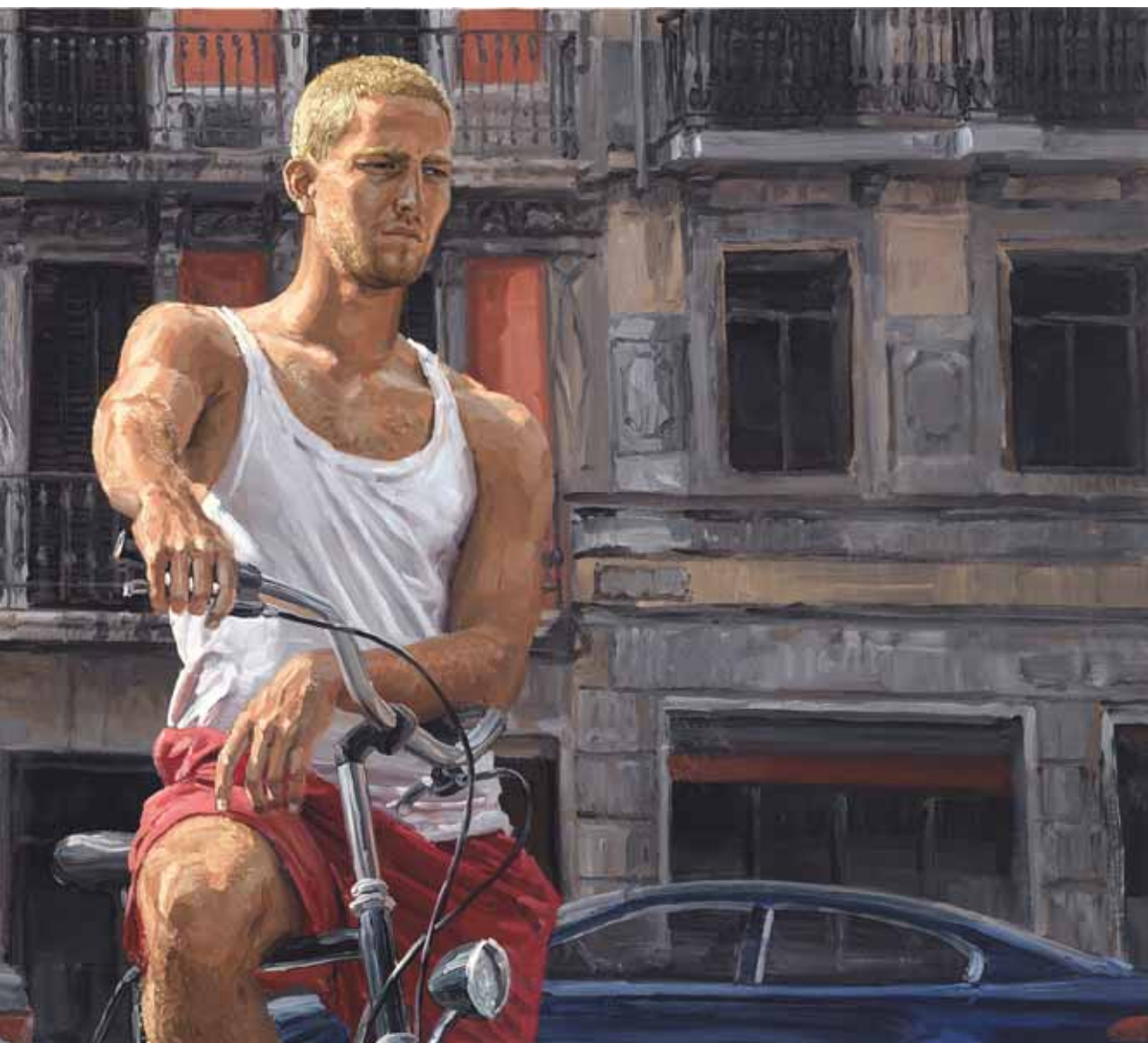
**What is your preferred medium and why?**

Obviously oil colours, as all my last paintings are oil on some kind of support. In my experience oils offer the deepest hues, are the most versatile and the most enjoyable medium to play with on a surface.

RIGHT:  
*The Angelic Beauty*  
oil on linen diptych  
190x300cm

*The End of the Journey* oil on linen 100x190cm









### Introspective: *The Consolation*

*The Consolation* is special for me, because it represents a new approach to my painting. I used to paint bright, sunny outdoor depictions and here I wanted to create a darker, more intimate atmosphere. For the first time I did not use a white canvas as starting point but I painted it with a deep purple tone, almost black, to create light from darkness. That meant that all the lit areas had to be rendered with a much thicker colour to impose itself over the dark background, while the areas in the shadows could remain thinner.

I wanted to create in the characters an air of sadness and loss. I had to make up almost the whole background, which originally was a shop of colourful, trendy shoes and clothes. I posed my wife for the hand and upper body of the girl in the middle, which were in an awkward position in the original picture. I placed boxes without brands all around, they also had to look empty and simple. I painted the Earth on the girl's T-shirt because it gives the scene a wider implication and it suggests a maternal feeling in the act of consolation.



Sneak Peek into the "Pursuit Of" issue  
featuring collaborations between poets  
and artists coming November 2010.



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